PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

THE NEW RADICALISM: ROUND II
Michael Harrington, Nat Hentoff
Irving Howe, Stephen Rousseas

SUSAN SONTAG
The Will and the Way (a story)

JOSEPH FRANK
Dostoevsky and the Socialists

ALAN FRIEDMAN
The Anatomy of a Poet (a story)

JOHN McCORMICK vs.
RICHARD POIRIER
On Mapping the Herzog Country

Reviews by John Atherton, Stephen Donadio, G. S. Fraser, Alvin C. Kibel, Richard Kostelanetz, George Lichtheim, William Meredith, Richard Ohmann and William Youngren

Poems by Edward Brash, John Malcolm Brinnin, Michael Fried, Sidney Goldfarb, Sandra Hochman, Daniel Hoffman, Gerald Malanga and Richard Tillinghast

A STATEMENT ON VIETNAM AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

3

SUMMER
1965

$1.25
7/6

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A significant novel from Regnery

Roma

by

ALDO PALAZZESCHI

A novel of contemporary Rome—its ascetics, pleasure-seekers, **nouveaux riches**, masters and servants—set against the hills, and fountains, palaces and taverns of the Eternal City.

"ROMA is the work of a marvelous old writer, shaggy, confident and full of a succulence which no twentieth century Italians but Lampedusa and Gadda provide." —**Richard Stern**

"Palazzeschi manages his characters with a kind of a whimsical irony, a gentle sadness that is most engaging."
—**Kenneth Rexroth**

"Palazzeschi has found the vital root, the very stuff of unadorned life, the basic given of mankind." —**Carlo Bo**

"ROMA . . . is a true encounter, a statement of faith."
—**Lorenzo Gigli**

"It has a quality of style and imagination that should enthrall the most demanding reader."
—**Giacomo Falco**

—**$4.50** at your booksellers

THE HENRY
REGNERY
COMPANY • PUBLISHERS
114 WEST ILLINOIS STREET • CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

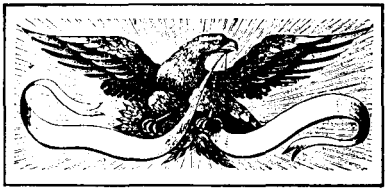
AARON COPLAND says,

"For the first time the whole panorama of contemporary American composition has been brought into focus by a perceptive and qualified writer-musician, an Englishman at that . . . An indispensable book not only for music fans and jazz buffs but for anyone interested in the development of American culture in the 20th century."

Wilfrid Mellers'

MUSIC IN A NEW FOUND LAND

THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN MUSIC



BORZOI BOOKS FIFTY YEARS

$6.95 • now at better bookstores

ALFRED · A · KNOPF

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In Parenthesis

by David Jones

"When IN PARENTHESIS is widely enough known—as it will be in time—it will no doubt undergo the same sort of detective analysis and exegesis as the later work of James Joyce and the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound. . . . A work of literary art . . . a work of genius."

T. S. Eliot
from A Note of Introduction

"A masterpiece."

W. H. Auden

"It may be the best book about World War I in English."

John Hollander
Partisan Review

"Magnificent description and poetry of a heroism unapproached in any other contemporary poetry."

Stephen Spender
New York Times Book Review

CHILMARK PRESS

Distributed by Random House

$5.75
(Compass Edition $1.45)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FROM CALIFORNIA

Poetry in Australia

VOL. I. FROM THE BALLADS TO BRENNAN
Edited, with an Introduction by T. Inglis Moore. Ranges from 1788 to 1930; from earliest folk songs to Brennan, McCrae, Neilson and Mary Gilmore. $5.50

VOL. II. MODERN AUSTRALIAN VERSE
Edited, with an Introduction by Douglas Stewart. From 1930 to the present with liberal selections from Kenneth Slessor, A. D. Hope, Judith Wright, and others. $5.00

Henry Fielding

Masks and Feast. Andrew Wright. ". . . Fielding was a highly conscious artist, as Professor Wright brings out more clearly, perhaps, than it has ever been done before . . . one of the most attractive human beings who have ever lived."—Walter Allen $3.50

Machado de Assis

ESAU AND JACOB

Translated from the Portuguese by Helen Caldwell. This absorbing political novel, the next to the last Machado de Assis wrote, is also a deeply conceived allegory. "Machado de Assis was a literary force transcending nationality and language. . . ."—Dudley Fitts $5.00

Mallarmé

TOWARD THE POEMS OF MALLARMÉ

Robert Greer Cohn. The fullest explication yet published of all of Mallarmé's major poems (the Poésies). September $6.50

Modern Hebrew Poetry

A Bilingual Anthology. Translated by Ruth Finer Mintz. 114 poems representing styles and themes of 28 major Hebrew poets of the past 60 years. October $5.00

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS · *Berkeley 94720*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PR PARTISAN REVIEW

EDITORS:

William Phillips, Editor-in-Chief
Richard Poirier
Philip Rahv
Steven Marcus, Associate Editor

ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR:

Caroline Rand Herron

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS:

Sallie Ellsworth
Mary Kaplan

STAFF:

Catherine Giles, Marie Grasberger, Ann Kaplan

POETRY CONSULTANT:

John Hollander

PUBLICATIONS AND ADVISORY BOARD:

Louis G. Cowan, Chairman
H. William Fitelson, Sidney Hook,
John Sargent, Richard Schlatter,
Roger W. Straus, Jr., Gore Vidal

PARTISAN REVIEW is at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. It is published quarterly by The American Committee for Cultural Freedom, Inc., and is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines.

Subscriptions: $4.50 a year, $8.50 for two years; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, $5.00 a year, $9.50 for two years. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency or with $0.50 added for collection charges. Single copy: $1.25.

No manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury. © Copyright 1965, by PARTISAN REVIEW. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

Distributed in the U.S.A. by Doubleday and Co., Inc. and B. DeBoer, Nutley, N. J. Distributed in England, the British Commonwealth, and Europe by Chatto and Windus, Ltd., 40-42 William IV St., London, W.C. 2, England.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SUMMER 1965 VOLUME XXXII, NUMBER 3

ARTICLES

The New Radicalism: Round II

Irving Howe 341
Stephen Rousseas 346
Nat Hentoff 358
Michael Harrington 366

Dostoevsky and the Socialists, Joseph Frank 409

STORIES

The Will and the Way, Susan Sontag 373
The Anatomy of a Poet, Alan Friedman 423

POEMS

John Malcolm Brinnin, Sidney Goldfarb, Michael Fried, Sandra Hochman, Richard Tillinghast, Edward Brash, Daniel Hoffman, Gerard Malanga 399

VARIETY

In Praise of Folly, John Atherton 441
Anon. (Circa 1965) 444

BOOKS

Theatre of Revolt by Robert Brustein, G. S. Fraser 449
Asquith by Roy Jenkins, George Lichtheim 452
Helmets: Poems by James Dickey, William Meredith 456
Aspects of the Theory of Syntax by Noam Chomsky; Current Issues in Linguistic Theory by Noam Chomsky; An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Description by Jerrold J. Katz and Paul Postal, Richard Ohmann 457
The Educated Imagination by Northrop Frye, Alvin C. Kibel 461
One Day by Wright Morris, Stephen Donadio 466
Music Observed by B. H. Haggin, William Youngren 468
A New Directions Reader; New Directions in Prose and Poetry #18, Richard Kostelanetz 476

CORRESPONDENCE 479

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oxford University Press

The Bradlaugh Case

A Study in Late Victorian Opinion and Politics

By Walter L. Arnstein, Roosevelt University, Chicago. Should Charles Bradlaugh, the notorious atheist, political radical and advocate of birth control, be permitted to take his seat as a Member of Parliament? This question agitated British political and religious leaders for more than half a decade (1880-86). In re-creating this incident, Professor Arnstein shows how it posed an ethical dilemma for Gladstonian Liberals, a political opportunity for Conservatives, and a challenge for Irish Nationalists. *Illustrated.* $8.00

The Dickens Theatre

A Reassessment of the Novels

By Robert Garis, Wellesley College. Professor Garis contends that Dickens's novels are essentially "theatrical," and that they have proved difficult to assess chiefly because his theatrical art differs so greatly from what is expected in serious works of fiction. He asserts that it is the theatrical style which permits the inspired freedom of Dickens's invention and observations, which in turn gives authority to his great radical attacks on social institutions. $4.80

The Carlyles at Home

By Thea Holme, illustrated by Lynton Lamb. "The domestic life of the Carlyles might be the prototype or symbol of a whole community watching its decencies and social obligations—with, of course, a dash of Scottish thrift. . . . No couple's physical daily life is more accessible; their pets and pests, digestive troubles and medicines, income and taxation, the plants they grew, the clothes they wore and mended, . . . Mrs. Holme presents it all in its duality as an anxious drama and, through Jane's own accents, an uproarious farce."—*The Times Literary Supplement* $4.80

The View of France

From Arnold to Bloomsbury

By Christophe Campos, University of Sussex. Believing that from one nation's popular image of another, both can learn something of themselves, Dr. Campos examines the image of France as it appeared in the works of English writers between 1840 and 1918. Viewing Matthew Arnold, Thackeray, Meredith, Walter Pater, Henry James, George Moore, Arnold Bennett, and the Bloomsbury group, he shows how the image of France was gradually modified and extended by the personal experience of each as well as the ebb and flow of national interests. The book is illustrated with contemporary cartoons and drawings. $5.60

Oxford University Press / New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brooklyn Bridge

Fact and Symbol

By Alan Trachtenberg, Pennsylvania State University. More than a remarkable piece of engineering, the Brooklyn Bridge has also served Americans as a rich cultural symbol. This book places the structure within the context of American life, uncovering its connections with economic realities as well as cultural ideals. "No one has written better about the Roeblings. It is an engrossing narrative."—NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON. "A scholarly job of research . . . interesting and informative."—STEWART L. UDALL. $5.75

The Springtime of Freedom

The Evolution of Developing Societies

By William McCord, Stanford University. Is the prevailing notion that dictatorships are inevitable in developing nations really valid? With illustrations from 19th-century Europe, post-1917 Russia, modern Japan, Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt, India, and Indonesia, the author demonstrates how the democratic, pluralistic approach is far more viable. $6.00

Equality and Liberty

Theory and Practice in American Politics

By Harry V. Jaffa, Claremont Men's College. Introduction by Charles H. Percy. Concerned with political realities, Professor Jaffa examines the way the Declaration of Independence has been interpreted by succeeding generations of Americans. "Professor Jaffa's wide-ranging essays on the American political system throw new light wherever they touch."—FRANK S. MEYER $5.75

Defender of the Faith

William Jennings Bryan: The Last Decade 1915-1925

By Lawrence W. Levine, University of California, Berkeley. "I read . . . with growing excitement and admiration—excitement from the wealth of new material about Bryan in his later phase, and admiration at the author's understanding, sympathy and objectivity. This book will compel a major re-evaluation of the later, tragic phase of Bryan's career."—ARTHUR S. LINK. "This painstaking examination of Bryan's later years will do much to correct the distortion of the man that has come down to us. And it is a book that is long overdue."—FRANCIS RUSSELL, *Christian Science Monitor* $7.50

Oxford University Press / New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES

The Free Press of Glencoe will publish **The Political Dilemma of American Capitalism, STEPHEN ROUSSEAS'** new book. Mr. Rousseas teaches economics at NYU. . . . **SIDNEY GOLDFARB** is having his poetry published for the first time in this issue of PR, and **EDWARD BRASH** and **MICHAEL FRIED** for the first time in America. Mr. Goldfarb graduated this spring from Harvard, and has been, he tells us, "mail clerk in vitamin factory, roofer, plumber, leather-necker, cab-driver." Mr. Brash studies classical Greek at NYU and works as an editorial researcher. Mr. Fried, a Junior Fellow at Harvard, studies art history and writes art criticism. **Appetites,** a pamphlet of his poems, was put out in England last year. . . . Atlantic-Little, Brown just published **JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN's Selected Poems.** Mr. Brinnin teaches English at BU. . . . **SANDRA HOCHMAN** just completed her third book of poems and is working on a novel. The Kornblee Gallery exhibited a collection of Miss Hochman's Poems-Collages this June. . . . **RICHARD TILLINGHAST** is finishing graduate work in English at Harvard. His specialty is Renaissance. . . . **DANIEL HOFFMAN** will lecture this summer at the International School of Yeats Studies in Sligo, Ireland. . . . **GERALD MALANGA,** who writes regularly for Kulchur, tells us that "since 1963 he has been Andy Warhol's apprentice." . . . **JOSEPH FRANK** has just returned from France, where he's been working on a book about Dostoevsky. He'll be teaching at Harvard for the spring term next year. . . . "The Anatomy of a Poet" is the first section of **ALAN FRIEDMAN's** new novel. . . . **GEORGE LICHTHEIM** is currently Visiting Lecturer in European history at Stanford. . . . **The Wreck of the Thresher, WILLIAM MEREDITH's** fourth book of poems, appeared last year. Mr. Meredith teaches creative writing at Connecticut College and writes us that this summer he is "directing a summer school for (primarily) Negro high school students." . . . **RICHARD OHMANN,** author of **Shaw: the Style and the Man,** is writing a book on theory of style. He teaches English and linguistics at Wesleyan. . . . **ALVIN C. KIBEL** also teaches at Wesleyan. . . . **RICHARD KOSTELANETZ** lives in South London on a Fulbright to the University of London. He returns to New York this fall. . . . **JOHN McCORMICK** teaches Comparative Literature at Rutgers.

Susan Sontag asked us to print the following note: "A distressing lapse of memory resulted in my attributing the direction of the Berlin production of Marat/Sade to Erwin Piscator instead of the Polish director, Konrad Swinarski. My apologies to Mr. Swinarski."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE POETIC ART OF W. H. AUDEN

By JOHN G. BLAIR. "Mr. Blair makes fresh use of Auden's critical prose and analyzes Auden's poetry in terms of his intentions and achievements. Mr. Blair organizes his book into discerning topical discussions and considers Auden's chronological development only incidentally. This approach is new in the books on Auden and establishes Auden firmly as a major figure in modern letters."—Frederick P. W. McDowell *192 pages. $4.50*

RELIGIOUS HUMANISM AND THE VICTORIAN NOVEL: GEORGE ELIOT, WALTER PATER, AND SAMUEL BUTLER

By U. C. KNOEPFLMACHER. Believing that the work of these novelists requires a special approach which must take into account the writers' ideological intent, Mr. Knoepflmacher offers provocative new interpretations of individual novels in terms of the ideas that lie behind them. He sets the novels in significant relation to each other and to the rich intellectual background from which they sprung. *328 pages. $6.50*

THE BURDEN OF TIME: THE FUGITIVES AND AGRARIANS

By JOHN L. STEWART. Two literary groups originating in Nashville, Tennessee, in the early 1920's had a strong influence on American letters. Known as the "Fugitives" and "Agrarians," they included, among others, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Donald Davidson, Merrill Moore. Mr. Stewart concentrates on the ideas, styles, themes of the two groups, and their widespread influence, rather than on biographical data. "—a searching, supple, and most of the time brilliantly precise account of the writing, ideas, and attitudes of several of this century's most interesting men of letters."—R. W. B. Lewis. *600 pages. $12.50*

Princeton University Press

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COLUMBIA COLUMBIA

EMOTION IN THE THOUGHT OF SARTRE

JOSEPH P. FELL, III

The author tests the adequacy of Sartre's phenomenological method and his theories of consciousness and motivation by relating these elements to Sartre's entire philosophy. In this provoking book, Fell presents an exposition of Sartre's ideas and analyzes the extent to which these ideas are justified. *$6.75*

MATTHEW ARNOLD AND JOHN STUART MILL

EDWARD ALEXANDER

Both Arnold and Mill, in their work, attempted to prepare for a democracy that would preserve culture. In a comparison of the thought of these two representative figures of the Victorian era, Mr. Alexander creates a dialogue between humanism and liberalism and does much to clarify the choices available to modern liberals who wish to reconcile the traditional humanistic ideal of culture with a democratic society. *$6.50*

A NATURAL PERSPECTIVE

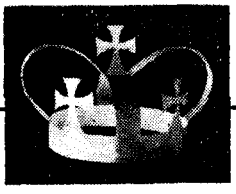
The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance

NORTHROP FRYE

Dr. Frye considers the comedies as a single group unified by recurring images and structural devices. He leads the reader from the characteristics of the individual play to a consideration of the comic form itself and its place in literature. "It is only rarely that one can say of a practitioner that he cannot safely be left unread. But one has to say it of Frye."—*New York Review of Books* *$3.75*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

2960 Broadway
New York, N. Y. 10027



COLUMBIA COLUMBIA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW RADICALISM: ROUND II

The pieces by Irving Howe and Stephen Rousseas continue PR's debate: "Is There a New Radicalism?" The discussion was opened in the Spring, 1965, issue by Michael Harrington and Nat Hentoff, and Mr. Harrington and Mr. Hentoff are commenting now on each others' positions. Different points of view will be represented in coming issues.

Irving Howe

The "new radicalism," as far as I can tell, seems largely confined to the campus, a minority segment of the civil rights movement, and a scatter of figures from the traditional radical past. It has not succeeded, nor does it seem very interested, in penetrating any major social group or institution in this country (as compared, say, with the radicalism of the prewar and war years, which had a strong base in the trade unions). The "new radicalism" embodies a curious mood, more mood than idea, a mixture of the very attractive and very disturbing; and since I've written about it at length in the current *Dissent*, let me just summarize a few points here.

1. What is most impressive about the "new radicalism" is that it springs from a genuine moral feeling, a release of outrage in regard to social wrongs that warrant outrage. Shortly after everyone was piously bemoaning the lack of commitment among the American young, a notable segment of the students threw itself into the struggle for Negro rights with a passion and selflessness that cannot be overpraised. If this rebellion is mostly apolitical and unstructured—the source of difficulties I will note later—it has the virtue of requiring a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

personal decision, not merely as to what one shall do but also as to what one shall be. It requires authenticity, a challenge to the self. Certain of the vulgarities, as also part of the ideological arrogance, of the Marxist groups can thereby be avoided.

2. With this genuine strength there goes a corresponding weakness: the lack of clear ideas and sometimes a feeling that it's wrong—or "middle class"—to think systematically. It is very hard these days for young people to become radicals at all: there is no recognized channel or agency to which they can turn, too many of their elders nourish memories of blazing youth but fail to sympathize with acts of rebellion in the present, and as a result, the dissident young have to start as if from afresh. Sometimes this means creative ingenuity, charm, aliveness; sometimes waste, error, hostility.

The society in which these young people grow up is so deficient in attractive or even firm values, so ready to substitute success for significance, so absorptive and shapeless in character, that often their rebellion must take the form of seeking modes of personal differentiation rather than strategies for political action. They search for extreme postures that will enable them to act out their distance from and contempt for a society that seems intent upon a maliciously benevolent assimilation. They search for a distinctiveness of style by which to thumb their noses at the middle class, which often means their own parents—and thereby, of course, reveal that they remain dependent on the middle class, which shares with them the tacit conviction that fundamental values are embodied in externals of dress, appearance, furnishings and speech.

Furthermore, the "new radicals" come upon the scene shortly after the intellectual and academic worlds have experienced a justifiable revulsion against the heritage of the Cold War; at a time when there is a general weariness with chauvinism, hysteria and mindless anti-Communism. The theme of "alienation" is made to do heavy duty, first as a genuine perception of how hard it is to achieve meaningful work and authentic self in our society, second as an inclination to revel in estrangement, as if it were some irrevocable doom against which human will and effort cannot now prevail. This mood is further intensified by the understandable responses of young Negro militants who, in the desperation of their struggle, feel themselves isolated, look upon their small band as a vanguard of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scarred, try to substitute their intransigent will for the sluggishness of history, and at times seem almost—almost—to want everything to explode in a tragic apocalypse.

Unavoidably, then, whatever radicalism does appear among the young will seek to express itself in violent gestures, in stances of generational defiance, in personal style more than intellectual content. And what should be of special interest for readers of this magazine: most of the intellectual spokesmen of the last few decades who have been most influential, figures like Sidney Hook and Lionel Trilling, cut no ice whatever among the articulate young; quite the contrary.

3. Concerning American politics the "new radicalism" has made one practical contribution insofar as it has linked itself with the tactics of passive or non-violent resistance that were first worked out by the Negro movements. On a theoretical level, its contributions have been sparse, indeed, its abilities meager. There is far too much uncritical repetition of phrases like "the Power Structure" and "the Establishment" (this last a favorite term of dismissal, used with a gay inclusiveness).

Deep down the "new radicalism" seems to have a large respect for the strength and durability of the American system, for it virtually foregoes the idea that significant initiatives can come from those major classes and groups that are more or less integrated into the society. Few of the "new radicals" retain any faith in the Marxist notion that the proletariat will provide the impetus or energy to change society—they are right in abandoning that political myth—and so they look about for new social groups to provide a dynamism for change. Some of them have fastened their hopes upon the "underclass," the unstructured and unrepresented poor beneath the visible social hierarchy.

What such hopes ignore is that all previous experience indicates how difficult, if not impossible, it is to organize and keep organized any large numbers of the declassed. But more important perhaps is the fact that even if, as is quite possible and highly desirable, local successes are scored here and there in spurring the underclass into action, the likely result would be that such organizations would find their way into the structure of society, sharing in its benefits and values, despite the wishes of the "new radicals" who had created them. The only way to keep the poor from temptation is to keep them poor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Obviously there is no magical stroke or strategy for the problems faced by American radicals: if there were, someone would by now have discovered it. I am myself committed to the "coalition" approach, which proposes that efforts be made to bring together into loose and intermittent association the major progressive forces of the country—labor, Negro, liberals, church groups, intellectuals, students—in order to work for current and intermediate goals. Socialism not being an immediate option in this country, it is necessary for socialists, while continuing to propagate their ideas in full, also to try to energize those forces that are prepared to stretch the limits of the welfare state. Such a dynamic once set in motion, there may be possibilities for going still further; but any political approach which dismisses in advance movements that represent the hard-won victories of yesterday must, I think, doom itself to sectarianism and isolation. The strategy I am suggesting here has many difficulties, not the least that it isn't very "dramatic." For young people who have just "made it" into radicalism, it even seems insufficiently radical. But radicalism is neither a quantity nor a way of measuring one's purity and rectitude; it is a political outlook; and if a rough adaptation of Fabianism is a possibility for us, then we must seize upon it with all the energy we have.

4. What is most—finally, the only thing that is profoundly—disturbing about the "new radicalism" is that a portion of its adherents has slid, almost without serious consideration, into support for totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Only rarely is this a matter of membership in a Communist or near-Communist organization: here the categories of the past do not apply at all. What is involved is a kind of political tropism, a head-long response based on impatience, lack of knowledge, and a cultivated disdain for recent history.

Few of the "new radicals" feel much attachment to Russia. Precisely as it has turned away from the more extreme and terroristic version of totalitarianism, so have they begun to find it unsatisfactory as a model: too Victorian and "bourgeois." When the "new Leftists" turn to politics they have little concern for clear or precise thought. What attracts them is the surface of vitality, the appearance of freshness, the drama of gesture. Several years ago they were likely to be drawn to Maoist China, which then seemed bolder than Khrushchev's Russia. But the Mao regime proved too grim and repressive. Since then they have been searching for new models and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new heroes, usually in the underdeveloped countries. Figures like Lumumba, Nkrumah, Nasser, Sukarno and above all Castro attract them, suggesting the possibility of a politics not yet bureaucratized and rationalized. But meanwhile they neglect to notice, or do not care, that totalitarian and authoritarian dictatorship can set in even before a society is fully modernized. They have been drawn to charismatic figures like Castro out of a distaste for the mania for industrial production that the Soviet Union shares with the United States; but they fail to see that these leaders of the underdeveloped countries, who seem attractive as agents of spontaneity and anarchic freedom, are themselves infused with the same mania for industrial production. And among the "new Leftists"—or, rather, among an especially vocal segment of them (since others remain pledged to democratic values) —this attachment to authoritarian regimes is accompanied by a number of other political symptoms: a harsh and often unreflective hostility to liberalism, which they see not as a great tradition of freedom and tolerance, but in its current debased and "pragmatic" state; an equally unreflective belief in "the decline of the West" coupled with a good many naive notions about the underdeveloped countries; a crude and unqualified anti-Americanism, etc.

Precisely at the time that so many intellectuals in the Communist world have worked their way around to a "revisionist" outlook which stresses the primacy of democratic values for any true socialism, here in the United States among some of the "new Leftists" there is an impulse in the other direction (so that, for example, entirely justified protests against United States bombings in North Vietnam have sometimes been contaminated by sudden discoveries of the worthiness of the Vietcong).

But there it is: a mixture of the attractive and disturbing, the hopeful and alarming, in part the result of our earlier failures. Those of us who speak for the democratic left have a job cut out for ourselves, but with firmness, patience and intelligence our opinions should have some effect. That job would become a little easier, I might add, if certain intellectuals of like persuasion would get off their hands and help to create an American radicalism both militant and democratic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stephen Rousseas

In his analysis of the new radicals, Hentoff makes liberal use of the distant "they." I shall make the more than reasonable assumption that he identifies himself with those he so favorably describes. To begin with, Hentoff sees a deepening class cleavage in America between the white and black poor and the rest of society. By "giving a voice (with power) to the voiceless—including themselves," the new radicals are expected to tap successfully the "power potential of the poor" for political purposes. The *old* radicalism of the thirties, however, has become irrelevant, and though the new radicals "are free of the emotional investment [of the older generation of American radicals] in past failures," they are nevertheless in need of a "new" ideology.

Strangely enough, the new radicalism is to get its ideological infusion by coupling its concern for the poor with the problems of cybernation. In this juncture, the goal of full employment becomes "illusory" and the traditional "meliorist" approaches of fiscal policy, public investment and job retraining programs are rejected out of hand on the grounds that they are "not radical enough." Indeed, Hentoff treats us to a naive restatement of Marx's theory of the progressive immiseration of the proletariat and the resulting polarization of classes in the new technological society:

> . . . As more and more of the lower-middle and then the middle classes find themselves made useless in the technological society, they may be ready viscerally for political action with the poor. And as security-by-attrition becomes increasingly difficult for organized labor . . . that sector, or parts of it, may be ready to move radically.

With this grinding down of the middle classes, the "growing ranks of the speechless" will rediscover their vocal cords and, with the new radicals at their head, march in a solid phalanx into the Hentoff version of the Great Society. The primary purpose of this "new" society will be the radical restructuring of the "old" in order to achieve the Aristotelian *telos* of permitting each individual to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

realize his potential according to the laws of his nature. Since Hentoff, as far as I can determine, has identified his new radicalism more closely with Robert Theobald's "theories" than with anyone else's, perhaps we should take a detailed look at Theobald's major work, *Free Men and Free Markets*,[1] and use it to illustrate the intellectual quicksand upon which Hentoff is building his "new" radicalism.

Robert Theobald is an economic popularizer whose main argument is that modern economic theory is living in the past; that it refuses to recognize the era of *abundance* in which we are all living; that, as a consequence, it views the economic problems of our times in terms of *scarcity* and hence insists that all remuneration be based on productive work. Theobald is convinced that we now live in a world of abundance and gives as conclusive evidence of this the "large-scale agricultural surpluses and . . . [our] ability to produce more than $60 billion in additional goods and services with our *presently* existing productive capacity." In his opinion, scarcity no longer exists—"abundance has arrived." Hentoff clearly accepts this position in criticizing "the present definition of 'work' and the link between the traditional definition of production and income" which obviously ignores our present state of abundance.

All this is based on a weird confusion. So long as we have two Senators from every state regardless of differences in population density, we will continue to have the *political* problem of agricultural surpluses. The problem, in other words, is a misallocation phenomenon which, in the economist's terms, exists because of political rigidities which interfere with the optimum allocation of our productive resources. The very objective of an optimum allocation of resources implies that our productive inputs are not in infinitely elastic supply at zero cost. And this is precisely what the economists mean by the word "scarcity." There is an elementary misconception involved here. "Scarcity" is *not* to be equated with "not enough to eat." An "abundance" of material goods is in no way a denial of the concept of "scarcity." Every society, whether it be rich or poor, capitalist or socialist, is faced with the problem of allocating its "scarce" resources in a rational manner if it is to achieve, *with a minimum of wasted effort*, the social goals it has set up for itself.

1 *Free Men and Free Markets.* By Robert Theobald. C. N. Potter, Inc. $5.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As for the difference between our potential full employment output and the actual performance of the economy, again we find matters in an acute state of confusion. The gap between potential and actual output implies that since the end of the Korean War our actual rate of economic growth has been not only below its historical long-term rate, but also below the full employment or potential growth rate. The trade cycle, in short, is still with us, with the peaks of our economic activity submerged below their full employment potential. I find it remarkable that this state of affairs should be confused with "abundance." But even if we should reduce the gap to zero, the problem of increasing the long-term growth rate above its historical or even full employment trend line would still remain. I would expect technological change to contribute towards this goal and would welcome it on that account. In this context full employment policies are not "illusory," and the idea of a guaranteed annual income is, as I shall try to make clear, hardly the answer.

Starting from this rather basic confusion over the meaning of "scarcity," Hentoff then goes on to raise the specter of cybernation and technological change. I would agree that automation is a serious problem, but like all serious problems it does not contribute to their resolution to react in panic and take refuge in gimmicky solutions. Technological change has been with us for a long, long time. Most innovations have been laborsaving and have, in the short-run, been troublesome. Yet the increases we have experienced in real wages, and hence in our standard of living, is directly attributable to technological change. Real wages over the past sixty-five years (to restrict ourselves to this century alone) have followed very closely the increases in the productivity of labor. Recent empirical studies have shown, furthermore, that the steady growth in labor productivity (and hence in real wages) is due more to technological change than it is to the use of more capital per unit of labor input (or what economists refer to as "capital deepening"). The net result of all this has been a phenomenal stability in labor's relative share of the total output of goods and services, with more recent data indicating a slight increase.

The problem of technological change becomes acute when the economy operates for any period of time at less than its full employ-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment potential. The threat it poses to labor becomes more and more serious with the passage of time as the large corporations channel their investment funds into plant modernization and more sophisticated equipment in partial response to the consistently upward bias of union wages. The solution, of course, is not to reduce wages but to undertake the proper corrective policies on a governmental level to keep the economy in a dynamic equilibrium at full employment. It should be pointed out, however, that there is no necessary connection between the level of employment and the growth rate of the economy. It is just as possible to have full employment at a zero growth rate as it is to have large scale unemployment at a high growth rate. Public policy, given the will, can achieve full employment at any growth rate. And with the economy kept at full employment levels, technological change becomes a boon and not the evil radicals of Hentoff's stripe tend to see in it. Our failure, so far, to undertake the necessary corrective policies is again a *political* problem and has nothing to do with "abundance," technological change, or our failure to divorce income from work.

Starting with the misconceptions inherited from others and linking them directly to the problem of technological change, Hentoff calls for a "break between work (as presently defined) and income." Uncritically, he embraces the guaranteed annual income proposal of Robert Theobald without recognizing its middle-class conservative bias. I find it strange that Hentoff (who earlier rejects fiscal policy and job retraining as "not radical enough") should choose to include an economic conservative in his roster of "new" radicals. The very title of Theobald's book, *Free Men and Free Markets*, is a dead giveaway. "It is the goal of all Western societies," Theobald tells us, "to ensure that each individual has the maximum of freedom in his choice of action compatible with the needs of society." Yet, in Theobald's view, "No attempt should . . . be made to provide the required resources through government control of the market mechanism, for not only will such an attempt fail but it will also prevent the original goal: it will restrict individual freedom rather than advance it." Since, according to Theobald, income should be divorced from work in the abundant society, he proposes that, as a matter of *right*, each individual receive a basic income regardless of whether he produces or not. Obviously, this basic income will come from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government. But government, according to some iron law of oligarchy, is not to be trusted in dispensing this basic minimum largesse. He therefore proposes a *constitutional amendment* which will confer upon each individual an "absolute constitutional right" to his income in order to prevent the government from "developing the most extreme form of tyranny imaginable." The naivete of this proposal is beyond comment.

But there is more to the proposal for a guaranteed annual income than Hentoff seems to be aware of. In addition to providing for the poor by giving them a minimum income (estimated at $3200 for a family of three), Theobald grafts on to this "Basic Economic Security" a supplementary stipend designed to protect the middle classes from the threat of technological unemployment.

> . . . Many of those now engaged in middle management and similar occupations will lose their present jobs and be felt by prospective employers to have insufficient intellectual flexibility to take on new types of work. The drastic and abrupt drop in income which will follow will mean that members of this group will find themselves suddenly unable to meet the expenditure commitments already undertaken as part of their way of life, both on a day-to-day basis and incorporated in their long-term plans.

Since the complete disruption of this "societally useful group" is to be avoided at any cost, a guaranteed annual income for the middle classes is proposed which would be, at the limit, three times the basic minimum, or $9600. The British economist, Thomas Balogh, was moved to observe (*The Correspondent*, March-April, 1964) that "Mr. Theobald is interesting because for the first time one sees the reaction of the middle-class to the threat of insecurity and unemployment which has been the daily experience of the working-class from time immemorial."

Apart from the middle-class, laissez faire orientation of Theobald's proposals, there is the simplistic belief than an annual, constitutionally guaranteed income will keep the American economy in dynamic equilibrium and see to it that the problem of inflation is avoided at every point in time. I would agree with this prognosis if the growth rate were irrelevant (which it is not in the power context of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cold War) and if goods and services were infinitely available without regard to cost. But since neither happens to be the case, and since in addition the government is required to keep its hands off the market mechanism, I can only forecast chaos as the result of Theobald's poorly thought-out proposals.

It is doubtful that output will increase continuously at an increasing rate because of technological change, and there seems to be no mechanism in Theobald's scheme which will keep aggregate demand in balance with the total supply of goods and services. Indeed, it is highly likely that monetary demand will far outstrip changes in real output. First of all, the American economy is moving more and more in the direction of services which, unlike Yo-Yos and bottle caps, are less susceptible to automation. In short, once full employment is reached the increase in labor productivity may well lag behind the increase in monetary demand under the guaranteed annual income plan.

In admitting Theobald so warmly and so prominently into the ranks of his liberated radicals, Hentoff seems to have missed an important point. Poverty, as we all know, is relative, and changes in the price level will quickly reduce the basic income of the poor below the minimum. And Theobald's bourgeois liberalism will only serve to perpetuate the gap between the "poor" and the middle class in this country. If, as I would expect, Theobald's proposal results in inflation, the poor will become poor all over again until an upward adjustment is made in the basic economic security payment and hence in the guaranteed income of the middle classes as well. There is, in other words, a built-in danger of progressive escalation in monetary demand.

In the Winter, 1965, *Partisan Review*, Martin Duberman, like Hentoff, commented that "radicalism is returning to American life" and attributed this radical resurgence to a civil rights movement which is "now moving beyond the race problem to broad social criticism." Michael Harrington sees the tilt towards the left as having come earlier, in November, 1960, with the election of John F. Kennedy and his commitment to peaceful coexistence, deficit spending and the welfare state. Though I have already expressed my doubts about the efficacy of the "new" radicalism of Hentoff, I have doubts of another

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kind about Harrington's interpretation of President Kennedy's brand of liberalism.

Harrington sees a new Left arising in the guise of the civil rights movement. But he regards it as a movement which has abandoned the "proletariat" and, in consequence, condemned itself to sterility by disowning this "historic agent of social change." His criticism of the new radicalism centers on its futile search for a "new" proletariat in the Negroes, the poor, and the campus radicals. Contrary to Hentoff, Harrington rejects them all as politically nonviable because of the relative smallness of their numbers. The poor make up only twenty percent of the population, the Negroes (who are also a large part of the poor) ten percent, and the campus radicals a trivial amount. Except for the campus radicals and the activists in the civil rights movement, who are themselves a part of the middle class, the poor, because of their poverty, have little taste for politics and despite the frantic efforts of the new radicals have increased their resistance to political organization. Therefore, Harrington rejects Hentoff's thesis that the new radicals will be able to tap the power potential of the poor.

This is, perhaps, an oversimplification by Harrington, but I do tend to agree with him on this issue. In effect he has pulled the rug from under Hentoff's left foot. "There is no new proletariat," says Harrington, ". . . in the political sense of a decisive group whose living conditions force it to rebel." The reason for this is fairly simple. As long as American society, despite *The Other America*, continues to be relatively prosperous, there will be no effective "new" radicalism to lead the way. The affluent Establishment will make *concessions* to the impoverished and deprived minority from time to time, and the more it does so, the less will the new radicals have to play with—the less will they be able to base their political power on Hentoff's now *shrinking* "ranks of the speechless." At any rate, there will be turmoil enough, but not the kind envisaged by the new radicals, and certainly not enough upon which to base a new radicalism for the structural reform of American society. And Hentoff's use of cybernation for a "new" theory of the polarization of classes is hardly convincing.

Having reached this point, Harrington has written himself into a box. Apparently, there is no hope for a radical resurgence. But the socialist in Harrington won't give up hope. What is needed is a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revitalization of the "old" radicalism which refuses to sever its umbilical attachment to the proletariat. But organized labor's record on the matter of civil rights is and has been a sorry mess for a long time. (I refer anyone who may be interested to an excellent study of the long-term problem by Ray Marshall, "Unions and the Negro Community," in the January, 1964, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review.*) Harrington admits that organized labor is anything but radical. And he is also aware of the frictions between unions and the Negroes, especially over the past five years when the unemployment rate has hovered persistently between five and six percent of the civilian labor force, and at double this range for Negroes. Two quotations from Harrington should serve to pinpoint his dilemma.

> . . . The true revolutionist is not he who talks most boldly but he who, with the limited options now before us, is patiently, radically trying to go forward to the next step.

> . . . It is simple enough to make a convincing argument that this unity [between labor and the civil rights movement] is impossible. Unfortunately, the same demonstration would also show that any real social change is impossible. If there be no alliance of white and black workers—or worse, if they should be at one another's throats—there is no political majority for what needs to be done.

This is exactly the problem. The "old" radicals have become gradualists in the face of political reality. The old slogans have become threadbare and no longer arouse the masses, as the European socialists and the British Labour Party have discovered. And American labor, "which is as far Left as the masses go," has become part of the Establishment. I remember a few years ago taking part in a conference with Michael Harrington at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Harrington's thesis at that time was that unions in this country, as compared to their European counterparts, were non-ideological, and that contrary to one's expectations more labor violence took place in the United States than in Europe. This he attributed to the non-ideological nature of the American trade union movement which concentrates on the redress of specific grievances with particular employers, without any overriding concern for social problems or reforms. Despite this view and despite the reservations he expresses

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concerning the "radicalism" of organized labor and its far from enlightened attitude towards the Negroes, Harrington sees no alternative but to hang on to his only remaining hope—the unions. It would have been the better part of valor to say that all was lost—that old-style socialism had become irrelevant for the American experience. But this he could not bring himself to do. And so he hopes to revitalize the now affluent proletariat by combining them with the civil rights movement. But I suspect he really has no great expectations on this score. His own analysis should prevent him from having any at all. Under present conditions of underemployment, any fusion of the rank and file of labor with the civil rights movement must be dismissed as sheer fantasy. And under conditions of full employment, the need for such a fusion will be largely absent. All that can be said about Harrington is that one must admire his refusal in the face of the facts to regard himself as a walking anachronism.

Between Hentoff and Harrington, my sympathies lie with Harrington. But what neither has succeeded in providing us with is some explanation of why American liberalism has failed to respond to the crises of our times.

American politics in the postwar era has gone through several stages. Its major characteristic, however, has been the end-of-ideology approach to social problems. This new kind of political philosophy measures the present in terms of the past. It recognizes that the problems of the thirties have been largely solved. Mass unemployment is no longer a problem, the trade cycle in the postwar period has been significantly dampened, the welfare state is fast coming into being, and President Johnson's vision of the Great Society is little more than a cleaning up of the few remaining odds and ends that have been carried over from the New Deal.

If we are not living in the "abundant" society we certainly have achieved the "good" one. Ideology no longer has a political role to play, as Harrington seems to recognize, however ruefully. The "true" radical has tempered his passion, as Harrington tells us, and is content to take his progress a step at a time. Politics, in short, has become boring and differences between the candidates of our two major parties minuscule—as President Johnson has so dramatically illustrated since his election.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In this setting, intellectuals have become disaffected and, as Seymour Martin Lipset tells us, "have turned from a basic concern with political and economic systems to criticisms of other sections of the basic culture of society, particularly of elements which cannot be dealt with politically." Or, as Daniel Bell has put it, the younger intellectuals "have found an outlet in science or university pursuits, but often at the expense of narrowing their talents into mere technique [while] others have sought self-expression in the arts."

The end of ideology, in other words, is equated with the solution to the basic problems of industrial society and it is this achievement which results in the inability of radicals to arouse the masses. When eighty percent of the people are well off and when the unemployment rate is well within politically tolerable limits, it would be unrealistic, as Harrington recognizes, to expect the other twenty percent to seize political power. It is true, of course, that a small part of the twenty percent can be aroused sufficiently to make things uncomfortable for the rest. But all that can be expected is that some belated concessions will be made by the more affluent majority. All this is to the good, and in this sense the new radicals have a very positive role to play. But they are deluding themselves if they think that they will be the ones to pipe us into salvation. Hentoff's article should cure one of any doubts about this. However useful they may be and however vocal, the new radicals will continue to be a minority group with limited political power. Just as the unions have proved unable to deliver the vote, so will the new radicals be tempered in their political pretensions.

The fundamental failure of liberalism in this country is to be found in its intellectuals—and not in the labor unions, or the poor, or the civil rights workers. For the most part, our colleges have become pre-professional schools where the better students are honed and sharpened for entry into the professional and graduate schools of our prestige universities. Social criticism has declined, the technical superstars dominate their departments, and the social sciences find themselves in the advanced stages of mathematization. This state of higher education in the United States reflects the general influence of the end of ideology among the intellectuals. I cannot, however, agree with them that modern society has solved its major problems. I consider this an intellectual atavism which goes back to the days of the New Deal. The problems we face in the sixties are of a different

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

order. They are more complex and not of easy solution. They are, moreover, of a type that cannot be readily understood by the ubiquitous man in the street. He can neither believe nor grasp the threat of nuclear annihilation. The problem of disarmament is also much too complicated to be fully comprehended by him. And the long-run power threat of an inadequate growth rate vis-à-vis the Soviet Union is the most remote of his immediate concerns, as is the problem of peaceful coexistence. Though these current problems are not within the conceptual framework of the common man, they are even more important than the problems he had to face in the thirties; problems which could rouse a nation into social experimentation and only because they affected a *majority* of the people in a direct and meaningful way.

Faced with these broader and more complicated social problems, the majority of academic intellectuals have retreated into their specialties and only now and then come out and try to communicate with the public at large, as they did in such an impressive way in the Washington teach-in on Vietnam. The non-academic intellectuals are no better off as can be seen from the appalling fare we are being provided with in the theater and in the arts in general—not to mention the recent flap in *Partisan Review* over what is and what is not "camp." In general, the intellectuals have turned their eyes inward and are steadfastly gazing into their psyche when not losing themselves in their specialties. They have, as a result, become politically ineffectual and by default defenders of the status quo.

The postwar decline of American liberalism can be laid squarely on their doorstep. The New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt came to an end as a social movement with the outbreak of World War II. In the immediate postwar period, the Fair Deal of the Truman administration was quickly caught up in the exigencies of the Cold War, and with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, it was largely forgotten. The early years of Eisenhower as president saw American liberalism cowed by McCarthyism and then later shunted aside by the enormous influence of the business community. It would be remarkable, indeed, if a major part of the intellectual developments of the past decade were not the result of a compromise with the practical politics of the entire postwar period. These twenty odd years took their toll of American liberalism and it changed gradually

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

until, in the fifties, it emerged in the conservative liberalism of John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The sixties, however, have seen a further refinement. Consensus liberalism, which began with President Kennedy, has found its greatest exponent in the person of President Johnson. The consensus liberalism of today has become the politics of the possible. It has eschewed leadership and embraced the polls. It is intent on finding the popular conditions for political success. But at the same time it confuses what is popular with what is right, and tries to be all things to all men.

It is within this context that the success or failure of the new radicalism of Hentoff and Harrington must be judged. It will have its skirmishes and perhaps even a few successes. It may topple a mayor or two, but all told it will be peripheral in its influence. Some of the new radicals may, in time, give vent to their frustrations and become more extreme—thereby isolating themselves and further reducing their political weight. I do not find this a pleasant prospect, but I expect no less.

Under these circumstances it is extremely difficult to entertain any serious hopes for a radical resurgence in this country. And it is on these grounds that I find Hentoff's and Harrington's analyses so wanting. The problems we will have to cope with now and in the immediate future are much greater than the problem of poverty itself. And to expect to use poverty as the touchstone for their solution is to exhibit a monumental lack of political sophistication.

It would be nice if progress were neat and continuous. Unfortunately, things may get worse before they get better. Like Harrington, I cannot bring myself to say that all is lost. But unlike Harrington, I am not willing to entertain false hopes. The only alternative is to stand somewhere between these two extremes and counsel an intransigent despair.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nat Hentoff

Michael Harrington's article on the "new radicalism" seems in many respects more like an exercise in wishful thinking than a political analysis. The piece also reveals his failure to understand the real nature of the new Left. I referred—and I assumed he did too—to the core of the new radicalism, represented by such groups as SNCC, the Northern Student Movement, Students for a Democratic Society, a growing number of CORE workers and their putative allies on campuses and among radical intellectuals as well as among those of the poor who are starting to organize themselves. I'm sure we both agree that the Progressive Labor Party, which predictably (despite its minute numbers and influence) is given absurdly wide coverage in national magazines, is not part of a viable new Left. Nor are any other neo-Stalinist or pro-Mao or ideologically quasi-totalitarian sects.

Harrington writes, "This new Leftism is youthful, disrespectful of radical tradition, and, because of the civil rights movement, values personal commitment and involvement highly." But the young are not so much disrespectful of radical tradition as they are disrespectful of those aging radicals who try to counsel and influence them in the terms of the thirties. I have heard Irving Howe, for example, address himself to the new Left, and I was saddened by his self-righteous conviction that he himself had nothing to learn from *them*.

It is true that the young, for the most part, have not yet thought through a comprehensive ideology or a strategy for basic social change, but it is also true that they quite rightly consider their situation to be qualitatively different from that of radicals in the thirties. For one thing, as I tried to show in my piece, the enemy is basically different. Second, these young people are not the children or the auxiliaries of already established parties or other "adult" ideological centers. (Even CORE, which was started and for a long time shaped by older radical-pacifists, is rapidly developing its own indigenous young leadership.) PLM (or, now, PLP), by contrast, *is* an offshoot of older ideologies (at least two of its leaders are former functionaries of the Communist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Party, and that is one of the reasons for the Progressive Labor Party's rigid irrelevance).

Third, because of the strength of their commitment and because of the existential force of the experience of working in the ghettos, the youth feel secure enough to be unafraid of "take-over" by manipulators from totalitarian groups. Accordingly, they are disrespectful of what to them seems the hysteria of those older radicals who tried to "purify" the Students for a Democratic Society's April 17 March on Washington to protest the Administration's Vietnam policy. The young knew they could protect the content of their protest against infiltration by fellow travelers of one kind or another, and they succeeded. Most of the active young are not ingenuous about the dangers of take-over, but they are convinced that they are at the very least as able as their elders to guard against manipulation and that those elders are spending far too much time and energy drawing frightened parallels between the radicalism of today and that of their own youth.

Harrington goes on to say that this is "probably the first serious Left in the last century which has ignored, or even rejected, the organized workers." But who has ignored whom? So far most of the prescriptions for a broad coalition which includes labor have been far too vague to make sense to the young. And the failure of the unions to protest our appalling adventures in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic hardly gives the new Left confidence in organized labor as an ally. George Meany refers to critics of American policy in Vietnam as "intellectual jitterbugs and nitwits"; and David Dubinsky of the ILGWU takes exactly the same line. Walter Reuther, whom the coalitionists regard as a more flexible possible ally than Meany or Dubinsky, is silent.

Domestically, Harrington finds hope in the rising militancy of such unions as the American Federation of Teachers and the social workers' Local 371 in New York. A few other unions, like Local 1199 in New York which has been organizing hospital workers and other groups, are aware of the need for fundamental social change. But on the whole, organized labor is concerned with protecting its own. It has done far too little about organizing the marginal workers and the underemployed. And nothing about the unemployed.

Harrington says, "the unions have the beginnings of a program

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to deal with the current situation. They are for national economic planning, for massive social spending to generate jobs, for upgrading various social benefits, etc." But he ignores the fact that organized labor is so intertwined with the Democratic party that it shows no signs of being willing to fight hard enough for its program. There is no indication that labor will dare risk a confrontation with the leadership of the "consensus party."

I do think that as cybernation cuts further into labor's strength and numbers more unions will be ready for a coalition with the underclass. But those who advocate broad coalition *now* forget that the groups they want to ally are moving at different speeds. In their analysis of the need for institutional change, those involved in action beyond civil rights (SNCC, the Northern Student Movement, etc.) are much more radical than organized labor, churchmen and most white liberals. The young radicals can work with the older groups on specific projects. But for the young to form any strong alliance with labor as it is now would be to slow down markedly the process of any real change.

Harrington and many of the younger new radicals disagree more fundamentally about the very nature of the "unfinished revolution." What should the goals of the new Left be? In the June-July, 1965, *Liberation,* Staughton Lynd speaks for those who, like myself, are opposed to the coalitionism defined by Harrington and Bayard Rustin. "The civil rights movement, so often called a revolution," Lynd asserts, "is thus far no more a revolution than the trade-union movement of the 1930's. Presumably the definition of a revolution is that the direction of society's affairs shifts from one group to another, and the economic foundation of political power is transformed so as to make this shift permanent. A revolution in this sense—and not merely public works planning by an Administration whose power rests on private ownership and lack of planning—seems to me required both to prevent war and to satisfy the needs of the other America."

If Harrington's claim that "the unions are the largest, most politically significant force for economic and social change in the United States," is true, we are condemned to stumbling meliorism while the conditions of the poor worsen. Certainly Harrington does not maintain that present labor leadership is committed to the kind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of revolution Lynd describes. Yet he adds, "in the political spectrum of this society, labor is as far Left as the masses go." Which masses? What about the millions of the poor who might be willing to go much farther if they were organized? Harrington says the two largest groups of the poor and the deprived—the young and the old—are the "most difficult to organize." But we know so little about the dynamics of organizing the poor to organize themselves in the current situation. Harrington may be right. But it is too soon for him or anyone else to conclude that the future must necessarily mirror the past.

The new Left has only begun to act as a catalyst among the poor. And other ghetto groups, which have sprung up without outside help, are also very new. A politicalized underclass has not yet emerged, nor as Harrington says, can one "wish or exhort or romanticize it into existence." But one *can* work toward that goal, and this is precisely what more and more of the young are doing.

But what if the poor were to start to move? "Even a full mobilization of all the impoverished would . . . fall numerically short of a majority," Harrington claims: the poor and deprived together total no more than forty percent of the citizenry. But a numerical majority is hardly essential to create an effective thrust for basic change. After all, the other sixty percent, many of whom are in their own way insular and apathetic, does not share a community of self-interest.

Harrington is right when he says that the Negro "cannot make a revolution by himself." The Negro will have to ally himself with the white workers, and with other groups. But because of the civil rights movement there is now more potential for self-organization among the black poor than among the white. And it is in the black ghettos that most attempts at community organization by the new Left and by the poor themselves are taking place. As more workers come into community organization, intensive efforts will have to be made in white ghettos too, like those made in Kentucky. And I agree with Bayard Rustin's statement of a few years ago that more white activists should ask themselves whether this course will be the most effective role they can play in the movement beyond civil rights.

In any case, if larger and larger groups of the black poor do organize themselves to acquire political and social power, they will *then* be able to enter into a coalition on an equal basis. They cannot do that now, even if a real coalition existed. And one of the primary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

objections to the current theory of coalition is that the black underclass's lack of cohesive strength fosters elitism. Without leaders directly responsible to a mass base in the ghetto, what real voice can the black poor have in any coalition at present? Instead, the Negroes now have "national spokesmen" who, for example, equate political maturity with "compromise" in the seating of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates at the Democratic party convention in Atlantic City. But whom do these leaders represent—in Mississippi or in Harlem?

If the black and the white poor each organize, we can then talk of an effective coalition of black and white workers and of the black and white unemployed. To speak now as if either group were cohesive enough to join a coalition in which its members would have decision-making power is to compound illusions.

I do not think Harrington has gone beyond wishful thinking in his belief that, "if the civil rights activists, the union members, the poor, the youth, and the rest of the population geared to social change could make of the Democratic party their party, that would be a tremendous step for the Left of the Sixties." Of course it would, but how is that to be done in view of the current state of the Left? Who will begin the take-over? In many sections of the country this change in the Democratic party will have to come through *black* organization. In some places, parapolitics may be the first step—as with the Freedom Democratic Party in Mississippi and the new Brooklyn Freedom Democratic Party. In other situations, people of the ghettos could take over the local Democratic party from below and elect people who are fully responsible to their constituency.

I recognize the danger that local power structures may then be able to dilute and detour these community organizations by granting part or all of their most pressing demands. If that were to happen the kind of revolution and fundamental redistribution of power called for by Staughton Lynd would remain a fantasy. Much depends, therefore, on the degree of democracy and the depth of understanding about basic issues in newly created community groups. That the black poor have not yet shown that they can be organizationally and politically hip is only part of the story. So far no real choice has been offered them that would warrant their ceasing to be apathetic about voting and about organizing themselves. What the new Left is trying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to do is to help them find for themselves genuine reasons for organizing and for selecting their own leaders.

Once the black poor begin to move, other sectors of society may be spurred to action. Already the dynamism of the civil rights movement has led not only to civil rights bills but also to a new look at public education and to at least a rhetorical "war" on poverty. Successful political action among the black poor could extend beyond remaking the Democratic party in the black ghettos to challenging white liberals and white "reformers" to organize *themselves* much more effectively. And with much more radical programs.

It's all too clear that these are difficult courses of action. But since organized labor, despite Harrington's overestimation of the value of its intermittent awakening, is *now* of little relevance to the underclass, I do not understand what immediate alliances for basic change Harrington has in mind. As a matter of fact, I expect that Ben Seligman is accurate in his picture of the kind of labor movement that *can* become relevant, both to its own increasingly vulnerable members and to the poor. "Ways must be found," Seligman wrote in the Winter, 1965, *Dissent,* "to organize and represent workers thrown out of jobs by automation; ways must be found to organize and consider the millions of ill-paid 'marginal' workers who scrape along on the minimum wage and suffer the consequences of racial discrimination. Perhaps new structures will be needed, amalgamated unions of workers cutting across industrial lines, just as in the thirties the CIO cut across craft lines."

When—and if—this kind of labor movement begins to develop, a coalition of the underclass with labor will be a much more realistic goal. And when churchmen and white liberals, instead of marching only from Selma to Montgomery, put real pressure on those who wield power in the North (many of them Democrats and self-labeled "liberals"), talk of a coalition with *them* will have some meaning. Take the city of New York. A "liberal" Democratic mayor, Robert Wagner, has for fourteen years presided over the steady deterioration of housing, jobs and education in the growing slums. Had he chosen to run in this year's election, who would have supported him? Virtually every labor union, including the "liberal" unions; the Liberal party, which is dominated by the ILGWU; and many, though not all, in the predominantly white reform movement in the city. And those

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

few churchmen who recognize the costs to the poor of another four years of Wagner—would they have spoken up? What has Harrington to say to the new Left in that situation? From what elements can one now construct Harrington's broad coalition for change in New York City? I will grant that if John Lindsay wins, he will probably not be elected by black and Puerto Rican votes. Out of habit, and mistrust of *any* Republican, they will probably still go Democratic. In this instance, what is to be done? Does the new Left try to convert organized labor in New York, which is quite happy with its relationship to a Democratic party that obstructs rather than facilitates social change? Or does it convert churchmen and white liberals? Isn't the real task—the most promising one—to focus on the ghettos and work with indigenous black and Puerto Rican leaders who are trying to organize their communities so that four years from now a Wagner will not be able to take the black vote for granted?

There are similar problems in most if not all large cities. To talk of a broad coalition now is too simplistic. In what Harrington calls a "brilliant" analysis of the new coalitionism in the February, 1965, *Commentary,* Bayard Rustin is astonishingly simplistic when he writes: "the objective fact is that *Eastland* and *Goldwater* are the main enemies—they and the opponents of civil rights, of the war on poverty, of Medicare, of social security, of federal aid to education, of unions, and so forth." If the situation were that simple, a meaningful coalition, even with things as they are, would be possible. But for the urban poor—black and white—a more immediate and more serious enemy is the Robert Wagners, the labor leaders in alliance with him, those well-intentioned policy-makers of the "war" on poverty who are making that operation a cruel hoax, and the interlocking corporate structures which make so many basic decisions for all of us. The enemy is also those members of a Rustin-Harrington kind of coalition who are not protesting against a disastrous, let alone immoral, foreign policy, a policy which rationalizes allocating at least forty-five percent of our budget to military spending (54.5 billion dollars in 1964) and which may ultimately bring about an integrated crematorium of all classes and colors.

The problem of redistributing power is much more complex than Harrington admits. And helping the poor learn how to organize themselves to get power is extremely complicated. There are no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

formulas for the future. There will be all kinds of interim alliances, and if there is change, it will move at many different speeds in many different areas. But the new Left is, I'm convinced, basically more in contact with reality than are Harrington and Rustin. The new Left neither "idealizes" the poor, nor does it believe that the past can be used to predict the future. And they do not allow themselves to be deluded into thinking that a broad-based coalition can be created *now* which, by some act of magic, will operate on an identity of interest between David Dubinsky and an unemployed black construction worker, between Walter Reuther and a youth who is sickened by what this country has done in the Dominican Republic, between a white churchman wearing his CORE button and the poor family on the next block whom he has never seen.

I am not optimistic about the chances for radical social change. To change the picture of the future that Donald Michael has chillingly —and unpolemically—drawn in *The Next Generation* will require a great deal of power. The blacks can't do it alone. The poor of any color can't do it alone. Nor can the young of the new Left. But they can perhaps start things moving.

Harrington says the new radicals are looking for a "new proletariat." What actually is happening is that, as Sidney Lens has pointed out, the new Left is attempting to group all the "left outs" rather than just the economic "have nots." The poor are left out, particularly the black poor. But so are the young who can find no personally relevant, honorable place for themselves in this society except in working to change it. Those clergymen who practice what they preach are also left out; but they too, if there are enough of them, can be effective. And as labor begins to recognize the insufficiency of its programs and its present political alliances—forced to do so by the changes in the definition of work that cybernation is making—it too can join with the left outs and those soon to be left out. At that point, if it is not too late, the Democratic party can be radicalized.

As Harrington says, "One need no longer be contented with the vision of a revolution. The more radical task of taking the next step is at hand." But for that task to be indeed radical, that next step must be taken before the broad-based coalition which he calls for can be formed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Harrington

Dear Nat,

I use the form of an open letter partly out of literary and political convenience, but also because I was puzzled and sometimes angered by your description of the new radicalism. So I find the informality and candor of a letter especially appropriate for my comments.

First of all, you draw a sharp and somewhat emotional line between the old and new radicals. You speak of the "irrelevancy of most traditional American styles"; Bayard Rustin, to whom you dedicated a book only last year, is now described as a "former radical"; you refer to the "retired radicals," and so on. Since I agree with most of Bayard Rustin's politics, I would be, by your definition, a "former radical."

But when I read your analysis, I found no basis for the anathema against people like Rustin and me. Your description of the substantive program of the new radicalism, with a few exceptions I'll note later, gives me a feeling of *déjà vu*. For these are precisely the ideas of many of the older, irrelevant, former radicals. The acrimony of the current discussion of old and new Lefts does not make for clarity, but let me try as calmly as I can to point out how much what you define as the new radicalism agrees with what you call irrelevant or former radicalism.

The War on Poverty, you say, not only is inadequately financed but also does not recognize that technology is making current definitions of work obsolescent, and most important, is breaking the traditional link between production and income. "It is here," you say, "that the new radicalism as a political and economic movement differs from much of the American radicalism that has preceded it." This is the position, you note, taken by the statement of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution (which both Rustin and I signed). For this reason, you go on, there must be basic change. You find it wrong, therefore, to spend "*all* one's energies" fighting for full

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

employment, massive public works, social investments, etc., although you recognize that demands for this kind of program do play an immediate, transitional role in the politics of the new radicalism.

But how does one get America to confront this new reality? You say "a new politics" must elect "a greatly changed Congress," which means you look toward a parliamentary (Congressional) transformation. To achieve this, you argue, a coalition will indeed be necessary. But, according to you, labor, the liberals and the religious reformers —all of whom would be parts of the coalition you are calling for— are not "ready at this time to move beyond meliorism." Finally, you see that the tax dollars in the official anti-poverty effort will not subsidize the poor in a revolution against the status quo.

From this grim perspective, you base the hope of the new radicalism on three developments. First: the young militants will go into the slums in every part of America and help the poor find a voice. Second: you predict that the middle and lower-middle classes might be rendered useless by technological change and thus made receptive to united action with the organized poor (or to Fascism, one might add). And third: you say that change in definitions of work may well push the labor movement to a much more radical position. Then, a really effective coalition could be formed with the newly enfranchised poor and the radicalized middle, lower-middle and working classes.

Such a coalition would allocate resources to satisfy social needs, improve the quality of education and provide a material basis for new definitions of work, such as that represented by the job of teacher's aide. There would still be a planning, centralist sector, but as a result of changes in values and the greatly increased individual participation in the democratic process the voluntarist and decentralist sector would become dominant.

I would quarrel with some of your formulations and emphases (of that, more in a moment) but I certainly agree with the drift of your thought and even take pride in having helped popularize some of these ideas during the last few years. But where, then, is the chasm between the old radicalism and the new?

Except for a few sectarians, no American radicals, whether veterans of the thirties or recruits of the sixties, believe that the workers are, on schedule, more impoverished and more revolutionary or that nationalization alone solves everything. But more than that:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the extent that there are these new ideas which you attribute to the new radicalism, they are by no means the property or creation of the younger generation. Indeed, if you took the trouble to check, you would find that these programmatic innovations are, in almost every case, the work of "former radicals." I labor this point not simply because I want to set the historical record straight, but because it reveals that the real difference between the old and new Lefts is not in their analysis of their proposals so much as in style, mood and tactic. (Incidentally, it also makes me think that perhaps my radicalism is not so former, nor yours so new.)

What are these nonprogrammatic, tactical differences that divide the new radicals from the old? Your description corroborates my thesis that the best and worst in the young comes from their search for a new proletariat. In theory, you, and many of them, admit the need for a coalition of forces; in practice, you say you have found *the* force, the poor.

For example, you write that the new radicals "realize—as a number of older, retired radicals do not—that class cleavage in this country is deepening." If this means that there is poverty in the affluent society or that the poor, unlike the organized workers, do not share even the major benefits of the welfare state, or that one result of the intersection of cybernation and the baby boom is a "growth potential" for poverty, then you and I agree. (Every one of these points, by the way, was documented by "former radicals" in the fifties and early sixties in journals like *Dissent*.) But if you mean—as I suspect you do—that class consciousness and solidarity are developing among the poor, that is quite another matter.

Let me be very explicit. One is heartened by every tendency of the poor to organize themselves and to rebel, and the attempts of some of the new radicals, who have gone into the slums and shared the daily life of those imprisoned there, to speed this process are more heartening still. But this does not prove that "the steadily growing ranks of the speechless" are finding a voice. As I've been saying, poverty can drive people either to protest or to passivity. In the widely publicized Philadelphia election for a community action council, only 2.7 percent of eligible voters went to the polls (13,500 out of 500,000). This hardly supports the thesis of the growth of *conscious, political* class cleavage between the poor and the rest of society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If the poor were becoming more militant and becoming aware of themselves as a group, that is, if some millions and tens of millions of people were becoming radical, then the rejection of coalition politics that is so often characteristic of the new radicalism would make some sense. If this were the situation, there would be no reason to subordinate the radical instincts of the masses to the meliorist bureaucracies of labor, liberalism and church. To be sure, even then coalition would still be necessary in order to achieve a political majority, but the terms of the alliance would be dictated from below. I suggest to you that American life is not so simple and never will be.

Strangely enough, the new radicalism's ultra-Left agrees with my analysis here. They too see no imminent prospect of revolutionary change—no new proletariat—within the United States. But their conclusion is a militant despair. In a vague and confused way, they look for eventual salvation from the revolutionary Third World forces. Domestically, they tend toward symbolic and even kamikase-like action. This tendency is difficult to discuss, so let me return to the mood, the style and the tactics which actually separate the old from the new radicals.

Your remarks, Nat, on the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at Atlantic City are extremely relevant here. For you, and most of the new radicals, have made of that issue a major dividing line. You even write that the MFDP's refusal of the convention compromise "will be seen in retrospect to have been one of the watersheds of the new radicalism . . . if this politics-by-the-poor approach proves viable. . . ." In arguing your case, like most of the new radicals, you confuse tactic and principle. It is certainly true that a dispute over tactics can get bitter and nasty, but that still does not justify your division of radicalism into two categories, the old and the new, the irrelevant and the relevant.

To have stayed outside Convention Hall would have been a defensible tactic. The civil rights movement could then have exposed the concessions and compromises made by a party that still embraces New Dealers and slave dealers. It might even have called on the best people in that party to leave and join the Movement in independent political action against *both* major parties. (This is the hallowed, spectacularly unsuccessful nostrum of traditional American radicals.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or the Movement might have picketed outside the convention hall in support of various programmatic demands. I would have disagreed with this as a strategy, but an argument could be made for it. In any case, the Movement itself rejected it.

When the Mississippi militants decided to go inside the convention, their strategy was no longer one of protest; it became political. Outside the convention, the Movement would have been able to control what was said and done and could have put forth its total program. But once the decision was made to organize as a *Democratic* party which would support the convention's candidate, if only to get a hearing the Movement had to ally with labor, liberal and reform forces. Thus the basic question was: how far would the Movement be able to move its meliorist allies.

From the outset then, the argument at Atlantic City was not whether to compromise but what kind of compromise to accept. In all reports of the convention, it's agreed that the MFDP was ready to take something short of justice (justice would have meant accrediting the MDFP as *the* Mississippi delegation and taking the privileges of party membership, such as Congressional seniority, away from *all* racist Democrats). The MFDP did feel, however, that the compromise eventually settled upon (two at-large seats for the Freedom Party) not only was inadequate, but also blocked the larger victory that would have been won in a floor fight.

In the recrimination following the convention, a line of principle was drawn between "us" (the Movement) and "them" (the white liberals and the "former radicals" who advocated a qualified acceptance of the actual compromise). In doing this, you and the young radicals mistook a bitter dispute over tactics for a question of fundamental perspective and morality.

Let me assume that the MFDP majority's analysis at Atlantic City was completely correct. (I do not believe this to be the case.) *Even so,* if the MFDP wants to change the life of the Negro in Mississippi and of the black and white poor in the United States, it—and the rest of the Movement—will have to collaborate with those labor, liberal and church forces that favored the Atlantic City compromise. Indeed, the support for the MFDP's challenge of the seating and Congressional status of the Mississippi delegation has come from those very labor, liberal and church forces. For nothing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that happens in Atlantic City can change the fact that there is no proletariat that makes up a present or potential revolutionary majority in America. There can be no "politics-by-the-poor" approach except within the framework of coalition. And the Movement and the new radicals must look forward, perhaps sadly and warily, to cooperating with the liberal groups. You and I both hope that the case for radicalism and the inevitable course of events will drive those liberal groups beyond meliorism in time for us to confront our revolutionary technological world. But it would be a disaster to interpret the basic disagreement at Atlantic City as an expression of the division between the militant Negroes and their radical white allies, and those you call meliorists. Yet that is what you and too many of the new radicals do. Your position is, I am sure, cathartic and bold; politically it is a sentence to permanent failure for the black and white poor.

Before concluding, let me talk about something neither you nor I really touched upon: foreign policy. The new radicalism certainly had roots in the peace movement, particularly in the ban-the-bomb campaigns of the late fifties and early sixties, but it has always been defined by its position on domestic issues—civil rights and poverty. And domestic questions led the new radicals to an analysis of society. As a result, there was a lengthy period, coinciding with the American-Soviet detente and the nuclear test ban, during which international issues were secondary. The new radicals had opinions about Fidel or Mao or Algeria, but these were much less important than their feelings about Mississippi.

But the recent disastrous escalation of American involvement in Vietnam and our crassly imperialist invasion of the Dominican Republic have changed this situation. One encounters new radicals who are so infuriated, and rightly, by Lyndon Johnson's foreign policy that they feel vindicated in their previous rejection of coalition on domestic issues with those who support the administration's international position. This mood is intensified by the *National Review*-like stand of the AFL-CIO, or more precisely, of the Meany-Lovestone team, on scandals like the Dominican invasion.

But how can the position taken by America in other parts of the world be changed? Internationalism has not been the strong point of the Left since World War I and the collapse of European Social Democracy. But some steps in that direction might be possible. If

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there were to be a new political majority, if tens of millions were to have a sense of shaping their own destiny, if the economic underpinnings of the military-industrial complex were being challenged, then one could look toward a mass movement for a democratic foreign policy, and for peace. In other words, domestic change will have to precede international change. One has to make political alliances *on domestic issues* with forces which one might regard as confused, or wrong, on the question of Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. Those who refuse such coalitions in the name of internationalist principle help to keep their principle the property of a tiny group.

But to return to the main argument. Your article demonstrated that one cannot define the program of a "new" radicalism in terms of generations. The programs you cite were all developed and popularized by those you would call "former radicals." In theory, you and I and the more political of the young radicals can generally agree on the need for coalition. But when it comes to tactics, you act *as if* there were a new proletariat, a "politics-by-the-poor" which on its own can transform society. And you overestimate the degree to which the poor are a cohesive, conscious and politically dynamic group.

In all of this, unfortunately, labels and denunciations have been thrown around; programmatic differences between the young and old radicals have been exaggerated; and tactical divergences have been blown up into issues of principle and morality.

There is, alas, no new proletariat, no simple way to change the most powerful nation in history. But still, I am heartened by the young radicals. We share so many ideas in program. And the disagreements which do exist on style and tactics I am sure will be resolved. Perhaps the most exciting thing about these new radicals is their personal commitment, which has taken them into the slum streets and the Mississippi Delta. This openness to experience has already given new life to the American Left and eventually it will give it new theory as well.

Fraternally,
Mike

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Susan Sontag

THE WILL AND THE WAY

1.

The story begins in a crowded place, something like a Greyhound bus station, only more refined. The main character is an intrepid young woman, of irreproachable white Protestant ancestry and even, regular construction. Her only visible fault was mirrored in her name, Miss Flatface.

Buffeted by mechanical stares, Miss Flatface decided to enter upon a career of venery. The spirits of Ben Franklin and Tom Paine whispered hoarsely in her ears, beckoning and forbidding.

Miss Flatface lifted up her skirts. A gasp was heard from one and all. "No sex, no sex," the crowd chanted. "Who could inspire desire with that face?"

"Try me," she murmured bravely, backing against a white tile wall. They continued to taunt her, without moving.

Then Mr. Obscenity bounded into the room, wearing white knickers, a plaid shirt, and a monocle. "The trouble with you fellows," he said, leering at Miss Flatface, then dramatically ripping open her nylon blouse without bothering to undo the buttons, "is that you've got principles. Too esthetic by far, that's what's wrong with you." He gave Miss Flatface a shove for emphasis; she stared, surprised, her eyelids fluttering. "Mild as any sucking dove," he added, seizing her left breast and aiming it at the enrapt spectators.

"Hey, I'm her husband, you know," said a sturdy young fellow—Jim was his name—who separated himself from the crowd. "Miss Flatface is only her maiden name. Back home she's plain Mrs. Jim Johnson, proud wife and mother of three, Den Mother, Vice-President of the PTA at Green Grove School—that's where our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kids go—and Recording Secretary of the local League of Women Voters. She has 9 and ¾ books of King Korn trading stamps and a 1962 Oldsmobile. Her mother—that's my mother-in-law—would be mad as hell if I let you get away with this." He paused. "If I let you get away with this—Mr. Obscenity—sir."

"That's better," said Mr. Obscenity.

"Jim," Miss Flatface called out in a cross tone. "It's no use, Jim. I've changed. I'm not coming home."

Something like a chariot, drawn by a team of two roan horses, pulled up before the frosted glass doors. Mr. Obscenity vaulted into his seat, and with a gesture that admitted of no refusal, summoned Miss Flatface to hers. Above the clattering hoofs, as they sped away, moans and giggles could be heard.

2.

Back home, Miss Flatface—formerly Mrs. Johnson—had been renowned for having the cleanest garbage on the block. But in the place to which Mr. Obscenity had spirited her, nothing seemed amenable to the laws of sanitation as she had known them. Overripe peaches were languidly let fall, half-eaten, onto the whitewashed wood floors. Sheets of pale blue legal-size paper were scrawled over with drawings of the male and female genitals, crumpled, then hurled into a corner of the room. Winestains flourished on the damask tablecloths, which were never changed. A flaking lipstick-smeared magazine photo of Marlon Brando was nailed on the inside of the closet door; the window sills remained undusted; there was barely time for Miss Flatface to brush her teeth once a day; and the condition of the bed—particularly that of the pillow, bristling with tiny feathers—was not to be believed.

From her window Miss Flatface could see the ocean, and a carrousel and a roller coaster called "The Hurricane," and small figures—grouped in twos and in families—sauntering up and down the boardwalk. It was summertime, and the several greasy fans about the room carved the air without vanquishing the heat. Miss Flatface longed to bathe in the ocean, though she would not have dreamed of washing off the pungent body smells that Mr. Obscenity relished. Her craving for cotton candy was more feasible. Practically no sooner had she voiced this wish than there it lay, wrapped in news-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paper, at her door. But when she was only half through, eagerly ripping off wads of the pink fuzz with her unnecessary teeth, Mr. Obscenity leaped on the bed and took her. Amid the twanging of bedsprings the slim cardboard cone, swathed with the wet sticky mess, fell unnoticed to the floor.

Sometimes people dropped in for dinner. While Mr. Obscenity presided at the end of the long oak trestle table, various swarthy figures bandied talk of Communism, free love, race mixing. Some of the women wore long gold earrings. Some of the men had pointed shoes. Miss Flatface had some notion of foreigners from movies. What she hadn't known about was their dreaful table manners, like, for instance, the way they tore off chunks of bread with their fingers. And the rich garlicky stews and foamy custards did not always agree with her. After dinner there was usually a good deal of solemn belching. Miss Flatface happily joined in.

Though sometimes unnerved, as much by the pulpy confusion of foods as by the tenor and momentum of the conversation, Miss Flatface had by now a good deal of confidence in Mr. Obscenity. He, whatever the state of his guests, was always immaculate and neatly buttoned. Her confidence was further increased by the clipboard stuffed with mimeographed papers which Mr. Obscenity often carried and frequently consulted, even at the dinner table. This augured well, thought Miss Flatface. There is some system here.

Hearty and ready for fun at the drop of a hat, that's how Miss Flatface tried to think of the guests. When lewd plaster statuettes were passed around the table, her neighbor might nudge her in the groin to express enthusiasm. Occasionally a pair of guests would sink beneath the table, which would shudder for a while until the flushed and disheveled couple re-emerged.

Observing that Mr. Obscenity seemed to wish to show her off to all his friends, Miss Flatface resolved to be as friendly as possible. One day, she hoped, there would be nothing that he might ask of her that she could not do.

"Sure is a nice little woman you got there," observed one of his black friends, a man everyone called Honest Abe. The black man flinched, flicking his cigar ash into a gold-plated diaphragm that served as an ashtray, and tilted back his chair.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Take her," said Mr. Obscenity with a genial wave of his hand. Then he jotted something on the clipboard.

"Well, I dunno," said Honest Abe. He rubbed the fringe beard which decorated his chin, musing.

Miss Flatface wondered. Was this big black Honest Abe afraid of slim Mr. Obscenity? Or did he find her undesirable?

"Ain't much of a face. . . ."

That settled it! Tears got ready behind Miss Flatface's eyes.

"And white women ain't good for my blood. That's what the Prophet says."

"Abe!" said Mr. Obscenity, menacingly.

"Yes, Mr. Obscenity. I mean yeah, boss. I mean yes, sir."

Honest Abe hoisted his great bulk wearily from the table, dropping his napkin. A heap of breadcrumbs tumbled from his lap to the floor. "Well, little woman, let's see what you and me can do. Can't do you no more harm than it does me." He chuckled.

Miss Flatface rose eagerly. She felt the faint tingling in her stomach. The spirits of James Fenimore Cooper and Betsy Ross whispered in her ears, beckoning and forbidding. "It's my duty, isn't it?" she asked Mr. Obscenity, wishing to quell the last shreds of doubt that soiled her perfect resolution. "The national will, I mean. The national purpose. And the national presence."

"You must do what you have to do," said Mr. Obscenity coldly. "This, after all, is the American dilemma." He made a notation on his clipboard, then turned back to his guests.

Honest Abe carefully removed his maroon velvet jacket and hung it on the back of his chair, then unstrapped the transistor radio which nestled in his armpit.

So that's where the music was coming from, thought Miss Flatface.

Their union took place in a bathtub, whose hard white enamel surface had been draped with gaily-colored bath towels, blue and purple and brown and yellow, like the tent of a sheik. Over the upper portion of the towels someone had considerately, perhaps even reverently, laid the Stars and Stripes. They do smell different, Miss Flatface had the presence of mind to observe. But it's a nice strong smell. I wonder why I was so afraid of them when I went into that candy store late one night to buy a pack of Luckies, or in the movie

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

theatre balcony (I was just a kid then) when that big one sat down beside me. Seeing them in the newsreels rioting and throwing bricks in their own dingy streets, it makes you afraid. There seem to be so many of them. But, one at a time, they're not so frightening once you get really close. They deserve all the rights they can get, she concluded.

3.

As day followed night, which was followed by day, all spent in riotous pleasures, Miss Flatface sometimes wondered if she still deserved her name. But Mr. Obscenity proved a stern taskmaster. He would not allow her near a mirror. He refused to answer any questions about her appearance, her talents, or her destiny.

Never once did she think of her mother, the widow of a railroad engineer and now living in St. Louis, not even to the extent of wishing to send her a postcard. Occasionally, very occasionally, she thought of Jim and the three children. Had he sold the Oldsmobile, she wondered. He wouldn't need two cars. . . . But there was no turning back.

"You have some power," she said to Mr. Obscenity one day. "But why are people afraid of you?" The spirits of Henry Adams and Stephen Crane whispered hoarsely in her ears, beckoning and forbidding. But was it forbidden to ask questions? It shouldn't be! Not in a free country.

"I mean, how did you get Jim to let me go so easy?"

Mr. Obscenity did not reply. He was plunged deep in Miss Flatface, elementary position. He merely placed a pillow over her animated visage.

She flung off the pillow. "And Honest Abe?" she said, looking up into his calm faraway eyes. "Why was *he* afraid of you?" Still no answer. "He's bigger—I mean taller—than you."

Mr. Obscenity continued to leaf, as it were, through her body. A gale of wind, premonitory of something, had just come up. Somewhere a shutter was banging against a wall.

Miss Flatface's attention began to wander. She watched a fly sipping at a puddle of cold coffee on the nighttable. Next the label on Mr. Obscenity's new tan jodhpurs, heaped on the floor, caught

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her eye. Finally she wondered if Mr. Obscenity had any trouble getting listed in the telephone book.

"Pay attention," he barked, withdrawing from Miss Flatface, turning on his side, and lightly dusting her torso with sugar.

"I am."

"Don't contradict me. You aren't."

"Well, what if I do think of other things? Who says I have to think about it all the time? Doesn't thinking spoil it anyway?"

"Look," he said, "this isn't a eurhythmic exercise, you know."

"Well, I don't know what that means," she said self-righteously, "but I know it isn't supposed to be hard labor either."

"Don't play innocent with me! I don't have all these people parked here for nothing."

Above the buzzing of flies about her breasts, Miss Flatface suddenly tuned in on a chorus of raspy breathing coming from the other end of the room. In the hallway, just outside the door, four Air Force lieutenants appeared to be playing bridge.

"I didn't see them," she protested.

Mr. Obscenity grunted.

"Honest, I didn't."

"I bet you were a fussy eater when you were a kid," muttered Mr. Obscenity.

"No, really—"

Mr. Obscenity replaced the pillow. Miss Flatface resigned herself to pleasure. She would ask her questions another time.

4.

"How do you like this life?" Mr. Obscenity deigned to inquire one afternoon in a muffled voice, while nuzzling between Miss Flatface's legs.

"Gosh," she exclaimed, "I never imagined life could be like this!"

"Want to continue to live like this?" he asked.

"Sure!" Since childhood, Miss Flatface had always said "Sure!" when she wasn't. "Who'd want to live different? I can hardly imagine it," she went on, with a tremor of anxiety at this untimely chain of consecutive words.

"Ah, my dear," sighed Mr. Obscenity sitting upright amid the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

damp rumpled sheets and patting Miss Flatface on the thigh. "I'm afraid you've had it. Don't you know, one must never think that no other life is possible than this. All other lives are imaginable, possible, even probable."

"What have I done?" she cried, dismayed to see that he had inserted his monocle in the socket of his left eye. Mr. Obscenity never removed his monocle except when engaged in the most profound carnal inquiry.

"Unless you wish to risk your life in one of the most picturesque exploits known to man—an orgy with no holds barred—I'm going to send you on your way. With references, of course. And some cash to see you through your first week."

An orgy with no holds barred? Drugs? Instruments of torture? Perversions? Artificial phalluses three feet long? She bowed her head in thought. The spirits of William James and Fatty Arbuckle whispered hoarsely in her ears, beckoning and forbidding. Mr. Obscenity drummed an indecipherable tune on her belly with his fingertips, waiting for her to come to a decision.

She was a brave girl, but not that brave. One sought an education in order to use it. She had not left Jim to die, but to live. For Miss Flatface there was a limit, even to voluptuousness. Innocent as she might be, despite all she'd experienced, she had some sense of her own worth.

"Want to flip a coin?" said Mr. Obscenity, languidly sketching with a soft orange lipstick the details of the pudenda in the vicinity of Miss Flatface's navel.

"Don't bother. I'll go," she said.

Someone put a dime in the jukebox. "Anyone Who Had a Heart," wailed a girl, "Would Love Me." Mr. Obscenity whisked a mirror from his pocket and began preening himself. First he inspected the inside of his nostrils, then punched his midriff for signs of flabbiness. Miss Flatface had never felt so let down in all her life. Suddenly, she felt terribly, terribly alone.

5.

Yet, Miss Flatface knew she was not alone in this place. There were other young American women here, too, in the charge of other educators like Mr. Obscenity. Just possibly they might be all in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

charge of Mr. Obscenity himself. Miss Flatface preferred not to think about that.

All houses by the ocean are damp. Added to the damp—for it was getting on to winter now—was the fact that the place was being painted. Workmen were constantly trooping through her room; buckets of paint, stiff abandoned brushes, rollers, cans of turpentine, and huge rough paint-encrusted ladders lay about, adding to the confusion. The place was being renovated. Miss Flatface gave way to a profound gloom.

Days went by without a glimpse of Mr. Obscenity. Miss Flatface tried to recall all she owed him. At first she supposed her tantrum was desire. It wasn't that. Not being of a grateful disposition, what Miss Flatface craved was revenge. She even had a plan. She would persuade some of the other boarders, pupils, call them what you will, to leave with her. Then Mr. Obscenity would regret the whim which had prompted him to decree her expulsion.

Who would she take? Only women, she decided. Dragging men along would make it too complicated. Miss Flatface had never thought of herself as a feminist before, certainly not when she had been Jim's wife and the mother of three. But now she felt the tug of sex loyalty. The spirits of Edith Wharton and Ethel Rosenberg whispered hoarsely in her ears, beckoning and forbidding.

Or was it that?

That very night, looking a bit slovenly in her blue flowered wraparound housecoat, she crept about the drafty corridors, listening and whenever she could watching at keyholes. Scenes of aching delight assaulted her senses. Was this the Eden she was to be deprived of? Then no one else should have it, either.

In the hall she accosted a dark-haired young lady wearing a beige trench coat over nothing else.

"You look like you can be trusted," said Miss Flatface cheerfully. "And since I'm clearing out of here—I mean I've had enough—how about coming with me? Wouldn't you like to bathe in the ocean, or ride 'The Hurricane'? You know, do whatever you want and not have to be taking down your bloomers all the time?"

Quick as a flash, the girl reached under her trench coat and pulled out a dark metal object. A gun? Miss Flatface drew back in terror. No, a camera. The girl laid the cold instrument to her eye,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and rapidly snapped a number of close-ups of her astonished companion.

"These can be developed by morning," said the girl. "I'll send you copies, if you want 'em."

"But what for?" cried Miss Flatface, realizing that her conspiracy was not even getting off the ground.

"They're for my album." Noting Miss Flatface's uncomprehending stare, she added, "You know, my collection."

"Your collection?"

"For 1046y, Marriage & the Family," replied the girl. "A research project for my junior year. Four points."

Although mystified, Miss Flatface now grasped enough to confirm her suspicion that this place was not the haven of spontaneous misrule it might appear. How else explain this girl, a crisp secretarial type, who probably took dictation at some phenomenal speed? Miss Flatface felt like an old frump.

The girl bared her large white teeth in a smile, then glided down the corridor.

"Wait," called Miss Flatface. "I *would* like a picture. I mean, so I can see what I look like in it."

"Why not," said the girl. "Tomorrow morning. And I won't use your name. Everyone is anonymous, you know. It makes the project more scientific."

Scientific! There's an idea! Why hadn't she thought of that before? Every large institution requires great machines, and this one couldn't be different. All she had to do was to get control of that machinery. That's what a revolution is. Not simply to use force, but to seize the means of power. Miss Flatface hastened to the boiler room. The floor was flooded, piles of moldy soaked books were precariously balanced on top of orange crates, and the stench of urine was almost unbearable. But the only machinery she found was a row of television screens, each carrying a different image, topped by a single screen which repeated one or another image from the row. Below the screens was a great prickly table studded with switches and buttons and dials and levers; and before that table, manipulating the panel and sporting a set of earphones, sat a bulky figure wearing a white plastic hood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mr. Obscenity," she whispered, fearing the worst, and preferring immediate censure to suspense.

Instead of turning, the figure convulsively manipulated some dials. The image on the master screen changed from a roller-skating derby to a woman, legs agape, in the last stages of childbirth. Demoted, the roller-skating derby continued, one of the images on the row below.

"Please tell me who you are. I know I shouldn't be here."

Competing with all these images, Miss Flatface feared she would never get an answer. The figure in the white hood threw a switch. A bald toothy state governor addressing a Shriners' convention was promoted from the row to the master screen, and the anguished mother-to-be seemed much calmer seen only once, next to the roller-skating derby. The political speech lasted a few moments. It was erased by the image Miss Flatface had had her eye on from the beginning, surely the most interesting, a delightful erotic scene between two women and a Nisei youth with an enormous erection.

Making an effort, Miss Flatface wrenched her glance from the master screen.

"Mr. Obscenity, I love you." This was a feckless lie.

A commercial for a new roll-on deoderant blanked out the erotic scene on the television screen. The impassive figure turned, its attention for the moment released. Miss Flatface, tremblingly, undid her blue flowered housecoat, yearning to seduce. So far so good: now she had the attention of the eyes, which were all of the hooded face she could see, quite to herself. A hand reached toward her clammy thighs. Miss Flatface noticed that the hand seemed slenderer than Mr. Obscenity's.

"Yes, yes," she cried, leaning toward the hand.

But at that very moment, the commercial ended, and the Nisei youth and the two women resumed their sport. The hooded technician's delicate hand hovered in mid-air, suspended between Miss Flatface and the instrument panel. Seconds that seemed like hours passed. Then the machine won: the hand abruptly lunged toward a dial. Humiliated, Miss Flatface wrapped the housecoat around her shivering loins, and found her way back to her room.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

6.

Next morning Miss Flatface, her eyes reddened by the first weeping she had done since she left Jim, was scooped from sleep by a loud knocking.

"Laura," said the man at the door, who wore a grey chesterfield coat and a grey porkpie hat. "Laura?" he said again, turning the name into a question.

No one had ever called Miss Flatface by her first name in this place before.

"Miss Laura Flatface?"

Miss Flatface was stunned, speechless.

"Let me innerduce myself." The man handed Miss Flatface an embossed card. *Inspector Jug, Detective,* it read. *By appointment only.*

"Now let's get this straight, Laura," said the man, all ceremony seemingly concluded. He had sat down now, but hadn't removed his hat.

"Who said you could call me by my first name?" cried Miss Flatface, indignant.

"Now lookee here, Laura," said the man soothingly. "I don't mean to frighten yer"—he said yer instead of you—"but I've gotten wind of what yer up to, and it just won't wash. No ma'am, it just won't wash. Them girls stay here, and the TV sets, too, and you gotta go. That's what the boss—you know who I mean—called me in to tell yer."

Provoked by her rejection of last night, Miss Flatface decided to see if Inspector Jug was proof against her charms.

"Music, Inspector? And perhaps a little wine?"

"Don't mind if I do, ma'am."

"You can call me Laura."

Ignoring the spirits of Eddie Duchin and John Philip Sousa which whispered hoarsely in her ears, beckoning and forbidding, she put on one of the latest pop ballads, rapidly climbing to the top of the Top Forty. The voices of an androgyne quaternity and the quakings of their electric guitars resounded in a heavenly echo chamber. Miss Flatface, ever attuned to new things, was entranced. But Inspector Jug was clearly of the older generation. "Turn off that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

record," he howled, pulling at his tie. "How can you stand all that bawlin'?"

"I like it," said Miss Flatface sweetly, suddenly lowering herself in his lap.

"Hey, watcha—"

Just then, another knock on the door.

"God damn!" muttered Miss Flatface.

It was the dark-haired girl, good as her word, who silently proferred a small manila envelope.

Miss Flatface tore it open, then gazed with delight upon her own features. Thank God, things had not gone too far: they were not indecently protruding. Perhaps they didn't protrude even in an average way. But that a definite change had taken place—a distinctly forward, assertive movement of her face—there could not be the slightest doubt. In her glee, forgetting who else there was to embrace, she threw her arms around the dark-haired girl and kissed her.

"Who's there," called out the Inspector, who although he'd been backing off from Miss Flatface's attentions was now beginning to feel ignored. It seemed that this day he would not have his mind solely on his professional duties. "Why doncha invite yer friend in?" he said, feigning causalness. Perhaps, he thought quickly, Mr. Obscenity could use a report on this one, too.

"Okay," said the girl. "For my collection," she explained to Miss Flatface, who didn't know whether she wished to share Inspector Jug with anyone else.

"Well, well, well," said the Inspector. "What a pretty pair of ladies we have here. One a little older"—he pointed to Miss Flatface, who was gratified to be mentioned first. "One a little younger," he said, pointing to the junior student in Marriage & the Family. "One blonde"—Miss Flatface again. "And one brunette"—the girl. "One with dimpled knees"—it was Miss Flatface's knees that were being fondled; "one with knees like a tennis player"—the Inspector stroked the back of the girl's leg. "One with a mole on her—"

"Inspector Jug!"

Alas, here Inspector Jug's anatomical inventory was rudely interrupted. At the fireplace stood Mr. Obscenity, black-caped and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arms extended like a great winged bat. His monocle glinted with the reflected rays of the sun, making one eye obsidian and relentless. His teeth seemed to be longer, and hair had sprouted on the palms of his hands. His face was a thing of terrible wrath. There was not a trace of mockery or compassion on it. Inspector Jug blanched, but held his ground; he did not move his hands, which rested on the buttocks of both women.

"You can't talk to me like that, Mr. Obscenity."

The girl screamed, broke away from Inspector Jug's grasp, and pulled down her skirt.

"You were my most trusted assistant, Jug," said Mr. Obscenity sternly. "And you have betrayed that trust. You know my motto: every man to his business. I know my business. And you should have known yours."

Inspector Jug had, visibly, begun to quail. Miss Flatface, feeling the hand which had grasped her buttocks so avidly now loosening its grip, becoming more tentative, even distracted in its lust, moved away. She had a faintly unpleasant sensation of coolness, also of emptiness, exactly in the place where Inspector Jug had held her.

Mr. Obscenity advanced, hands like claws.

"But Mr. Obscenity—sir—"

At these halting deferential words Miss Flatface knew the game was up. Inspector Jug couldn't brave Mr. Obscenity any more than the others. The king of the jungle, she thought, will ever be king.

"You!" called Mr. Obscenity to Miss Flatface, imperiously. "Stay where you are. I want a word with you, as soon as I've lopped a piece off this sniveling rogue."

"Don't go, Laura," pleaded Inspector Jug. "You can clear everything up. Tell him how businesslike I was when I first came in the door. I wasn't doin' nothin' wrong. You can tell him that, Laura. Tell him! Please!"

Mr. Obscenity sank his fangs, through winter coat and all, into Inspector Jug's shoulder.

"Is there a way out of here," Miss Flatface said, addressing herself to the dark-haired girl, who crouched cowering by the door. The girl pointed, mutely. Miss Flatface heard the sound of prancing hoofs. "Consider this an escape," she announced to the two men.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'll get you," shouted Mr. Obscenity. "No one escapes from here. You must be expelled." Saliva streamed from the corners of his mouth.

"Me, too, Laura," shouted Inspector Jug, pressing a handkerchief to his bleeding shoulder. "I'll get yer for gettin' me in dutch with my boss. Hellion! Bitch!"

"I'm staying," said the dark-haired girl, dropping her skirt to her ankles and lifting her sweater over her head. The two men ignored her, their first act in unison. All their hot desire, tardy as the hottest desire ever is when it is not premature, was flung at the proud departing figure of Miss Flatface.

7.

She never regretted her departure-escape. Her apprenticeship was over. Strictly speaking, her chosen career of venery could only be practiced on the outside, in the world proper. It all worked out perfectly. Because the life of a woman not drawn to this profession either by breeding (remember her impeccable white Protestant descent) or by background (Jim, the three children, the League of Women Voters, the trading stamps) is a hard and lonely one, she might have faltered. As it was, she had reason to court solitude. She knew those two would not give up easily.

Pursued by Mr. Obscenity and Inspector Jug, Miss Flatface traversed the length and breadth of the United States, carrying her warm treasure between her legs. Wherever she went, she spied replicas of her former self—pale, greedy, self-denying women fortified by pop-up toasters with infrared rays and boxed sets of stainless-steel steak knifes made in West Germany. Miss Flatface, penitent for her former life, traveled light. Of course, she sold herself for money. The spirits of William Jennings Bryan and Leland Stanford chided her, when she didn't get a good price.

Her mentor, Mr. Obscenity, first caught up with her in a lumber camp in the Northwest, somewhere near the Canadian border. He was not wearing his monocle or his knickers. His plaid shirt was carelessly stuffed into a pair of faded bluejeans. Miss Flatface, plying her trade in front of the town's only movie theatre, did not at first recognize him. His recent exertions seemed to have aged him. He had grown a little fat, and was less well groomed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What rang a bell was the low mocking bow he made as she ambled seductively past him.

"Come near me and I'll scream," Miss Flatface returned with surprising presence of mind.

"Don't panic. I'm not going to force you. Did I ever force you to do anything?"

Miss Flatface remembered. The answer was no.

"Just come back," he said. "We'll forget everything that's happened."

"You sound like Jim," she said.

A sulky coquettish expression passed across Mr. Obscenity's features. He had decided to ignore her last remark. "I'm not as spry as I used to be," he mused aloud. "I don't know why, but I'm tired."

"I'm not," she said. "At least, not yet."

"Well, just tell me one thing. Has that rat Jug found you yet?"

Miss Flatface slowly began to realize this new, unearned power she had over Mr. Obscenity.

"Because if he does," he continued, "and you listen to him, I'll kill you both." He snarled. "Listen to me! If not for me, then for your own sake. Don't you realize he's the undoing of all that you and I have done?"

Miss Flatface considered that this was possibly so, but she wouldn't give Mr. Obscenity the satisfaction of letting him know she agreed with him.

"Well," he said, sighing, "let's get it over with. On the house, of course."

"Certainly not," said Miss Flatface with great severity. "I'm not a charitable institution."

"I was," said Mr. Obscenity.

His irony, intended to arouse sympathy, backfired. Miss Flatface laughed. Mr. Obscenity's lips became foamy, and he parted them in a sinister smile which disclosed a set of razor-sharp teeth. He advanced gruesomely, inexorably.

Miss Flatface made the sign of the cross. It didn't work. But, opportunely, a tree toppled and grazed him on the skull, leaving Miss Flatface plenty of time to slip down an alley and make her escape.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her suppliant, Inspector Jug, first accosted her some months later while the roof of her mouth was burning from an impetuously gobbled slice of pizza-with-pepperoni. They were squeezed side by side in an all-night eatery in Times Square.

"Gee, Laura," he sighed, wheezing. "It's been a long time catching up with yer."

"I've nothing to say to you," she said, wiping her mouth with a paper napkin.

"You don't hafta say nothin' to me. Just clear me with my boss. That guy's awful mad at me."

"How's your shoulder?" asked Miss Flatface with routine sympathy.

"Poorly, Laura."

"Well, I can't help you. I've got to look after myself, think of myself first. . . . Anyway, stop passing the buck. Be a man! What do you care what he thinks? Don't you know this is a free country? You're free, So am I. And"—a little sententiously—"I intend to make use of the liberty which God and the Constitution have awarded me."

Inspector Jug looked distinctly crestfallen at this militant declaration.

"Anyway, are you on the level?" asked Miss Flatface. "I mean, is this the real reason, the only reason you've been following me around? I did get that smutty wire in New Orleans, you know. I just didn't see any reason to answer it." She ordered another slice of pizza.

"Well, little lady. . . . I reckon not. I really like yer. For yerself. You've got spunk. Guts. I sorta thought we might team up, Laura, maybe start a little agency, with you as a full partner. Lots of divorce cases, stuff like that. A lady investigator does even better than a man. How about it?"

"You mean you've been following me all over the country to make me a business proposition!" The spirits of John Brown and Dashiell Hammett whispered hoarsely in her ears, beckoning and forbidding.

"Well, I admit it ain't just that. I'm attracted to yer, I admit it. . . . Why don't we go to my hotel now and. . ."

"Look," said Miss Flatface. "I meant it when I said this was a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

free country. It took me a long time to find my freedom, and I'm not giving it up. At least, not until it's *my* idea, not somebody else's." And after these forceful words, she abandoned her second slice of pizza uneaten on the counter and marched out into the turbulent street.

Looking back, she saw that Inspector Jug did not follow her.

Miss Flatface's brave words to Mr. Obscenity and Inspector Jug were sincerely meant. She did love her freedom. But that did not mean she was not occasionally lonely.

Proof might be that in this period a streak of morbidity cropped out in Miss Flatface, which expressed itself in a taste for disasters. Not political disasters: while in Times Square, she rarely looked up at the news flashing by. The private, domestic ones. Between jobs, for which she used a convenient hotel on Tenth Avenue, she would buy and pore over all the scandalous weekly papers. She found irresistible such headlines as: "My Milk Killed My Nine Babies." "For My Husband's Sake I Was Blind For Forty-Two Years." "I'm Not Ashamed." "I Looked Like This Until I Had Plastic Surgery." "Cooked Alive!" "I'm A Member Of The Fourth Sex." "My In-Laws Drove Four Nails Into My Skull." "I'm Not Ugly, I'm Just Funny Looking." "They Left Me Outside For Seventeen Years." The stories, often, were less vivid than the headlines, but, no matter. From the headlines alone Miss Flatface received sufficient and, need one say, vicarious pleasure. For she'd decided that she herself was perfectly normal looking. Never did she meet the slightest reluctance from the Johns because of her flat face.

But if men generally found her attractive, she had to admit that she did not find every man equally attractive. A total sensual thrill was not always forthcoming. Yet she might flare up simply upon spotting from behind someone whom she thought at first was Mr. Obscenity, or even the insipid Inspector Jug.

Miss Flatface tried to drown her occasional discontents by keeping on the move. That way, too, she got to know this country extremely well—its enormous human resources, its majestic natural setting. From time to time she would take a vacation, travel just for the sake of traveling (this also helped to throw her mentor and her suppliant off the track), saving a little money and hitchhiking or taking a bus to the Grand Canyon or Yosemite National Park

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or Carlsbad Caverns. Once she spent two whole weeks in a little cabin in the Ozarks, catching up on back issues of the *Saturday Evening Post*, sleeping twelve hours a day, and occasionally yielding to the advances of George, the proprietor of the Friendly Ed Motel in the nearest town.

She knew some other work would be less strenuous than hustling. A telephone operator or a clerk at a J. C. Penny's or a waitress had it easier than she. It was not just the risk of disease but all the standing, and even worse, the walking; her feet swelled and it was hard to find attractive heels that didn't pinch her corns. But, really, she wouldn't have changed her life for any other. It had brought her a peace of mind, a vitality and an aplomb, she'd never known before. She who had often flagged in her daily tasks as a fully mechanized suburban housewife with only three children, two of them school age, now found herself always on the go, full of pep. Truly the power of sex, even though discovered late in life, is a magical one.

So great was her energy that when she first encountered both Mr. Obscenity and Inspector Jug at the same time—it was a deserted street, lined with warehouses, on the near north side of Chicago—she had the presence of mind to call the police and have them arrested for molesting her. Actually, they hadn't gotten around to that yet. Mr. Obscenity, monocled, clad in a parka, corduroy pants, and high rubber snowboots, was leading Inspector Jug by some sort of harness. That's what I call a sick relationship, she thought.

The Chicago police are not noted for their courage or their incorruptibility, but they did not seem in the least fazed by the odd-looking pair which Miss Flatface consigned to their care.

"I bet that's not the last of them," Miss Flatface reflected aloud, as she left the station, after the disreputable twosome had been booked. Mingled with anxiety, there was a wistful note in her voice.

8.

Mr. Obscenity and Inspector Jug, usually singly, rarely in tandem, accosted Miss Flatface no less than 174 times within the next five years, by telephone, telegram, and personal appearance. Often the interruption was very embarrassing, and Miss Flatface

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lost her composure. Gradually, however, her strongest emotion toward the pair was condescension, with a touch of alarm. Would they never give up? Didn't they know the meaning of rejection? Had they no pride?

9.

While eating in a diner just outside of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Miss Flatface finally fell in love for the first time in her life. He was a sailor, named Arthur; seated next to her at the counter, his feet twined around the bar stool, he was bulldozing his way through three hamburgers doused in ketchup and relish. Miss Flatface longed to reach out and touch his smooth healthy cheek. The spirits of Warren G. Harding and John F. Kennedy whispered hoarsely in her ears, beckoning and forbidding. For Arthur looked a little like Jim. Something in the eyes, in the shape of the head, the way the hair curled at the nape of his neck. Watch out! the spirits cried. But he's not Jim, said Miss Flatface to herself. Nor am I I.

He's a man, that's the resemblance, observed Miss Flatface, after a few nights in Arthur's tireless arms. Of course, he isn't very interested in sexual variety. (Neither was Jim.) But who needs that, she said to herself, sternly repressing all memories of the unpredictable Mr. Obscenity. The main thing is that he loves me. And he won't sit on me—a figure of speech—as Jim did, because now I know my own mind.

She went with Arthur to San Diego, where a wedding ceremony was performed. They rented a room at the Magnolia Arms, with cooking privileges, but Miss Flatface no longer liked to cook. When Arthur was away—he regularly shipped out for weeks at a time—she lived on cans: ravioli, which she ate cold, and sardines, and spiced ham. In the morning, after going down to get the mail, she would wander over to the local Bowl; in the afternoon there was bingo. Needless to say, she was faithful to Arthur—sealing her fidelity by taking to wearing loafers and white socks, an ungainly fashion from her own high school days. And Arthur, when he returned home, was as affectionate as ever.

"Laurababy," he would shout as he burst in the door, his tanned face beaming. "Boy, did I miss my baby! Boyoboyoboy." Miss Flatface loved the boy in Arthur even more than the lover.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When she turned to his body, upon his return from a voyage, it was first to see if he had any new tattooes. That was a game between them. Arthur's forearms and biceps were already printed with colorful designs; now he made sure to get them in less likely places. He would fall on the bed squealing—he was ticklish, too; another one of his charms—as Miss Flatface examined his armpits, his navel, the folds of his groin, and all the secret zones of his body. "Just wait till I get hold of you," he would mutter with mock fierceness, between his squeals and giggles. Miss Flatface would insist on continuing to look carefully for the tattooes. This game was a lovely part of their joy. In her joy with Arthur Miss Flatface began to forget her former lives.

She had a reminder, though, after one particular evening while he was in port, and out with some of his seamen buddies. On such evenings Miss Flatface knew better than to ask to come along, but she allowed herself to question Arthur when he came home about what he did. "Aw, you know," he said this evening. "A lot of booze. And chasin' after girls—not that I'm interested in any other girl when I got my baby here at home waitin' for me. And talkin' to a couple of funny fellows at the Blue Star."

"What fellows?"

"Oh, just some guys." He laughed, and slapped his chest. "Fact is, they were the funniest two fellows you ever laid eyes on, honey. One had a monocle and some kind of crazy outfit, like he was English or something. Like one of them polo players. Real stuck up. But the other guy, the guy he was with, he was real friendly. Got me to talking about myself. I told them all about you, what a great little wife I got." He smacked his lips appreciatively, then planted them on her neck.

"Arthur," Miss Flatface cried shrilly. "You just stay away from those two men. Don't ask me to explain. Just stay away from them. Promise me! You hear?"

"Okay, okay, okay." Arthur's spirits drooped, for he was not accustomed to being yelled at by his wife. A mean thought, one of the few ever to cross his mind, came without ado to his lips. "I guess I understand. I know you got a pretty wild past—"

"Arthur!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Aw, I'm sorry." Kiss. "Let's forget about it. Come on, let's watch some TV and get to bed, huh?"

Throughout the night, Miss Flatface could not rid herself of the suspicion that Mr. Obscenity and Inspector Jug, at separate windows, were watching her and Arthur making love. She longed to get up and look. But she hated to alarm Arthur. She doubted—since he was groggy with beer—if his potency could have survived such an interruption.

At dawn, with Arthur curled up on one side of the bed, Miss Flatface made her way outdoors. It was as she'd suspected. Her two pursuers were nonchalantly sitting on the curb, near the bus stop.

"I thought you two hated each other," she said irritably.

"We've made up," said Inspector Jug. "Joined forces."

"Pay no attention to him," said the familiar imperious voice of Mr. Obscenity, tinged with silver mockery. "You know your place, my dear. And it's not at the side of that—boy." He spat the word out with something less than contempt. "Was it for this childish purple, red, and green Arthur that I rescued you from Jim, taught you all you know? Good God, woman, do you realize how much older you are than he? Does *he* realize it?"

"We've never talked about it," said Miss Flatface tearfully. "He loves me."

"But does he *know* you?" persisted Mr. Obscenity. "Does he know you? As I do."

"Mr. Obscenity—sir," interjected the ever apologetic Inspector Jug.

"Quiet, you moron!"

"But shouldn't we tell her the dope I've got on him? I got this whole dossier."

"What dossier?" she cried.

"Well, Laura," began Inspector Jug in a confidential tone, "yer Arthur wasn't always a sailor. Before that he was a—"

"You idiot!" screamed Mr. Obscenity, losing altogether, for the first time in Miss Flatface's knowledge, his splendid self-control. "Don't you see that's no way to get her back!"

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Miss Flatface, growing stronger in the face of Mr. Obscenity's disarray. "You can't spoil Arthur for me. I need him. And I won't give him up."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And when he's thirty? Do you realize what an old bag you'll be?"

"It doesn't matter," said Miss Flatface. "Let me be, both of you, I beg you. I've done my duty. I had my pleasures. Now I want to be."

Suddenly Mr. Obscenity's knickers looked wrinkled and absurd in the bright sunshine. His monocle seemed grotesquely affected. And no one, but no one, wears a hat in Southern California, least of all on a sunny early morning. Miss Flatface began to laugh.

10.

After only a few more months of second marriage, Miss Flatface, still in the flower of her womanhood, became mortally ill. It began as ptomaine poisoning, contracted just over the border, in Tijuana. As she had approached the aged vendor's cart, and even while she was chewing the tacos, a food she had never particularly liked, the spirits of Margaret Fuller and Errol Flynn screamed warnings in her ears. But she hadn't heard them. Ever responsive to the American spirit in its broader manifestations, she had never been particularly attuned to its more direct signals. Arthur, on the other hand, who never heard voices, had settled for a Pepsi.

Two weeks after she took to their Castro Convertible, sustained by the best medical care the seamen's union could provide, she became delirious. Eyeing the grieving man slumped in a chair by her side, she cried, "Jim, I didn't know that you were here!" Then, with just the slightest touch of insincerity: "It was grand of you to come!"

But it was not Jim. It was still Arthur. Faithfully, he nursed her through the endless hours of bedpans and cups of consommé and damp washcloths laid on her still far from prominent features. And although he was the one romance in her life, Miss Flatface barely acknowledged Arthur's care. In a lucid interval, between deliriums, she called for a lawyer and dictated her will. Even here, Arthur wasn't mentioned. Miss Flatface did not take into account the present at all. Her mind, as she approached death, was unexpectedly preempted by effusions of a patriotic nature, and with thoughts of her former husband and children. In the end, we all return to our beginnings.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

11.

Miss Flatface's Last Will and Testament.

"To America—I salute you, especially those parts of you which are not beautiful: Doris Day, for instance, with her gross untroubled features; your new banks; your candy bars; your parking lots. I have tried always to see the best in you, and your people who while friendly and full of fun on the outside are often rather mean on the inside. But no matter. My life has been spent in the discovery of you, that is, of myself. I am what I am because I am a citizen of this country, and a votary of its way of life. Therefore, let my body be cremated and my remains scattered among the cigarette ashes next to the potatoes which lie uneaten (because you are dieting) on your dinner plates.

"To the National Association of Mental Health, to Radio Free Europe (sending beams of hope behind the Iron Curtain), to the League of Women Voters, to the NAACP (for helping speed the progress of the integration of our two great races), to the National Convention of Christians and Jews, to the Girl Scouts of America, to the Bahai Temple in Chicago, to the University of Vermont (the college of my choice)—I don't forget the TVA or the Book-of-the-Month Club, except that they don't need my help—to all the bodies which contribute to the way of life distinctly American, I would give generously, if I could I would leave ten thousand dollars to each;

"To my children, who must be grown by now, and have certainly forgotten their wayward mother—Jim Jr., Mary, and little Willums, the baby—I leave a mother's blessing, and my aquarium, which my own mother has faithfully kept for me (or so she promised) since I left home to marry your father, if the fish have not all died;

"To my former husband Jim, in the hopes that he has long since forgiven me, all my policies, fully paid up, with the Equitable Life Insurance Company;

"To Inspector Jug, my contempt, this not being intended to reflect on the honor of policemen and detectives generally;

"To Mr. Obscenity, the ingratitude he richly deserves.

"(Signed) Laura Flatface Johnson Anderson."

12.

Anderson was Arthur's last name.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the Easy Come Easy Go Funeral Home on Las Madrinas Blvd. a crowd of mourners gathered. Arthur, flustered by the unexpected turnout, sped off unnoticed by a side door, later returning with a large carton of sugar cones and four gallons of vanilla ice cream. He loaded the cones with ice cream, three at a time, and distributed them among the guests. A photographer was circulating about. Several mourners concealed their cones when they saw their picture was being taken.

Among the mourners were to be seen a monocled figure, somewhat downcast in mien, attended by a burly man in a squashed porkpie hat. "What a waste," the man with the monocle kept muttering. "What a damned waste." When Arthur came round with a cone for the monocled man, he waved it aside haughtily, then stalked from the room. Snatching the now dripping cone from Arthur's hand, the man in the porkpie hat raced after him. "Rude bastards, aren't they?" whispered some of the mourners, relatives of Arthur's, who had never approved of his marriage but had hastened to the funeral.

In the back of the funeral parlor, a sturdy man—greying at the temples—sat alone, weeping into a large yellow handkerchief.

Just before the cremation was about to start, the weeping man lurched to the glass crypt, and grabbed Arthur by the collar.

"I'm Jim Johnson, you know. Her first husband." Then he broke down utterly. "It's hers," he said, his words broken by sobs and muffled by the handkerchief which was covering his face and to which he was referring. "Did you ever know that she loved yellow?"

"No," said Arthur sadly. Perhaps Arthur would have been a little less sad if he had known that this fondness for yellow was an item about Miss Flatface that not even Mr. Obscenity, urbane and sensually observant as he was, had known.

With a manly gesture of infinite tenderness, Arthur threw his arm around Jim. Together they both knelt in silence, as the body was consumed. Up in heaven, Miss Flatface watched approvingly. May she be pardoned if she gloated a little. It may be that none of us is ever wholly known. But who among us has been loved so well?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON VIETNAM AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

We do not think that the present or past policies of the United States in Vietnam are good ones, and we lament the increasing and often self-defeating military involvements which those policies require. We have not heard of any alternative policy, however, which would actually lead to a negotiated peace in Vietnam or promote the interests of the people of Southeast Asia. This is not to say that the critics of American actions in Vietnam are therefore required to propose a specific policy. But it is not unfair to ask that their criticism be based on more than the apolitical assumption that power politics, the Cold War, and Communists are merely American inventions. Most of the criticism of Administration policy at the teach-ins and in the various petitions we have been asked to sign has simply taken for granted that everything would be fine if only the Yanks would go home. It is not clear whether these critics think Asia will not go Communist if American troops are withdrawn or whether they don't care. Nor is it clear whether they really care what happens to the people of Southeast Asia so long as America gets out.

The creation of a world in which free societies can exist should be the goal of any international policy. Our policies in Vietnam do not promote that end, even though it is claimed that they are justified because the United States is preventing a Communist take-over. Nor do the policies of North Vietnam, Communist China or the Vietcong, however they are explained. As for our policies in the Dominican Republic, they cannot be justified even on the grounds that the United States is preventing a Communist coup. They are a disastrous violation of any democratic principle, a violation likely to alienate the people of South America, especially the youth, or even drive them into an alliance with precisely those Communist forces our government claims to be combatting.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The fiasco in the Dominican Republic illustrates, we think, what is basically wrong with our policies. So long as we are not able to understand the political and economic problems of rapidly changing countries, and to support democratic revolutionary groups, we are bound to find ourselves in a false dilemma, always having to decide at the last minute whether to intervene, as though that were the only solution. Military action can be a substitute for political foresight only if we propose to police the whole world, and to imagine that we can do that is to lack even hindsight.

Obviously, the time has come for some new thinking. And some of it has to be about what's happening in different parts of the world, regardless of what the United States does or fails to do.

Eleanor Clark
Martin Duberman
Irving Howe
Alfred Kazin
Bernard Malamud
Steven Marcus
William Phillips
Norman Podhoretz
Richard Poirier
Richard Schlatter

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POEMS

THE SAINT IN THE PICTURE

Sometimes he rooms in a small cave, his patch
of heaven furnished with a skull, a bench,
a fawning lion daintily *couchant,*
a table on which lies an open book.

Sometimes—all mission, no portfolio—
dragging the swank of Venice toward a ship
no bigger than a shell, puffed up, he sails
to bag some gorgeous ape-like emperor.

He's whole; as full of virtue as an egg.
He dominates the ground and the foreground,
and seems most potent when he's sitting still.
His anguish reaches only to his eyes.

His self-possession's almost total, yet
he never quite sees what he's looking at—
neither that landscape in whose distances
a tiny dukedom flames, nor that melée
of long-haired children fleeing the black swords
of soldiers who, for reasons far beyond
his ken, wear purple stockings freaked with gold.

Asserting, mindlessly, that he's elect,
he saunters sometimes through a colonnade,
descends a stairs, or crosses a piazza,
to find that his mere being, charged with light,
commands the hawk-like princes to their knees,
and urges beggars from their bundled sleep.

Wound up in an idea of God, he cuts
a loving figure yet remains unloved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If only once he'd bruise his shins, and wince . . .
if only once he'd smile as a man smiles
who knows, quite merrily, there is no hope . . .

but no. He's out to keep his soul in shape—
to glow inside the rib-cage of a fish,
to sit on a pillar like a stork, to set
a velvet faction against one in silk
and, wobbly-footed, like a dog in drag,
go tottering toward the knuckles of a pope.

John Malcolm Brinnin

SAILING OFF

If I could pluck you this afternoon
From this bevy of pilgrims and executioners,
You too could lap the shore of that inner world
Of choice. Not that I care who you are,
For some will read this because they have to,
And some will find it among the onions
They are peeling inadvertently, and some
Will have the gist of it spat at them in time,
As they yield, impaled upon a steering post.
These have I known. I was never concerned
With what they were, but with what they would become,
On a given afternoon, such as this.

To begin with I should tell you that my quest
For soil is at this very moment being
Disturbed by a young thing who does not care.
She is shaking a blanket so carelessly beside
My window. When we meet in the hallway

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We greet each other cautiously, married
Man to unmarried woman. It's in those
Other moments she knows she has me: when she
Bends over so beautifully to breakfast
Her cat, or sweeps the back porch as if it were
Her lover's back, or slips from her bicycle
With that grimace of joy—To begin with these

Intrusions is, perhaps, to explain what's been
Keeping me from this act of apprehension
So long. Marriage is no substitute
For patriotism. So here I am,
No less than man, plunged and tossed
Amid Gods and ideologies, trying to find
The place where the least people starve and the most
Are concerned for one another, where my son
Can grow up with a love of the useful
And the beautiful and the powers
That provide for them. And seeing me slosh
Around in their bay of self-content,

The overseers of this civilization,
Wise as they are in profitable discord,
Have the foresight to invest in diversions,
Not to keep me, but to make me forget
I wanted to leave. Thus am I sucked back
To that jetty in the resort portrait
To wallow in the reeds offshore, racked with needs
I cannot account for: to spend myself
Into a woman I loved once, or into
A woman I have hated all my life,
Or simply to nab the first head that happens
Along and fasten her in her tracks.

All hands must knot their parallels: As the
Workingman is given a bowling alley
And two weeks in the Poconos to keep
Him from the just end of owning what he makes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So is the poet kept from fulfillment by touching
Upon customs that allow for completion
Only through madness, murder and rape
Or constant, various, faceless love.
As yet I have not murdered or raped, though
I have written some subversive poems,
And as for the love as they say on T.V.,
Thank God for my wife and my friends.

So you can see how hard it is to get
Away. For a departure, I will address
My woman, for you are wives of this poem,
All of you: Woman, when you left me
This morning to go where you go, I never
Thought I'd sail so far before you got back.
I will leave this in the bedroom, and you
Will read it while I'm at sea. When you read it,
Forget the places I have passed, but listen
Where the torments break upon the shore
And spurt with the sweat of love through the last ditch
Of my dreams. For it is there that we must live.

Sidney Goldfarb

THE ANSWER

Loving as I do the nauseous moment
Before the green wave destroys itself,
When it is held upright only by my
Imploring glance through to its brown viscera,

How could I fail to answer
The same annihilating clarity in you,
Once having glimpsed behind your green irises
Something brown and vast heaving over?

Michael Fried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN A RENTED ROOM

Yes, just sweeping the floor
With the old sexy broom
Bought on the lower east side
And painted white
To seem invisible against the ice-box

I hear the joke again. The one
That a lady with bright yellow teeth
Once told in the Parkside Hotel
To my dad and one of his friends
And it ends: *How did we get here?*
Two brooms swept together. She tells it again

And again in my dreams
Though she's long out the window
And I can't remember her name. Except
That I think of her,

And her joke every time that I sweep
My house before I slide into dustless sleep
And sifted dreams
Of many long hotel
Corridors. Keys. Bell-boys.
Telephones. Night-tables. Maids
Ring me from the bed
And shake me in the vacuum of the dead.

See. It's just a broom. The
Dust pan's no more
A laughing broom table. The broom
Is red. And the old kingdom?
That broom-garden is dead
With hotel rooms, lost laundry, and lost lies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON THE ISLAND OF MULL

Having burned all our islands
There was only one left. And we went
There—on the ferry—avoiding
Various friends connected with old disasters.
When we arrived, the island
Was empty. We were carrying our belongings
In plastic bags, and talked
Of a sea-side house
That would never belong to us. Looked
For a place to stay. A sea place
With a bed, where we could lie down
And joke. Love each other. Smoke. Sink
In that bed, performing the Wreck
Of the Hesperus
On a bed that didn't belong to us.
But there was not one bed.
Not one house. And remember this?
We found white sea dollars
Under the very white sand.
And we slept in the sand.

The fire-flies scared us to dig,
Deep and make our hole for sleeping in.
I remember your sleep
As I sang to you. We were cold and you
Were breathing as if in pain
Since we had run
To the island of Mull, knowing no-one,
Only our own names. In the morning
That strange silent wind came. I woke up
And saw a fisherman—was it a joke?—
Holding a bleeding gull in his hand.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And in my dream
I was that gull in your hand.

It is all on another hill.
The ferry ride. The lost island of Mull.
That beach without a house. And the man
Who was also you—
Holding me high to the wind.

Sandra Hochman

THE CREATION OF THE ANIMALS

We were angels before the sky lost us
I touched myself my hands were new
were not hands We
spoke sounds that no one understood
that were no longer words

He would come and watch our mouths learning the food
he gave us in love with his own brilliance
Using his power had left him innocent
and he thought he had made us new
not missing us not knowing he had blundered
and we had fallen from the sky like tiles from a mosaic
never dreaming his strength had struck out
beyond his will

Later on when he saw that things had gone wrong
beyond his power to restore them
it rested him to look at us
And I found I could love him in his weakness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as I never could before
The beauty left his face and his eyes began to cloud
with the grief that killed him

I ran on the grass made paths through the woods
felt the rain in my fur
Remembering the golden cities no longer moves me
I begin to forget I flew once and knew the key
to patterns
I no longer have the mind for

Richard Tillinghast

ONE

There exists on the river-banks,
And where rivers divide for the sea,
Much as debris collects on sand,
Assemblies of soft creatures, who, unbent,
Distort themselves skyward,
Whose feet puncture the clay.

With their caravans, more abrupt
And ghostly than the tide's changing,
Dust plugs up their foot-prints,
Wind sweeps without effort
Into hollows they filled, for the earth
Has no reason to know them.

Yet slight monuments cling to them
Unasked: where they sleep
Is not rain kept separate
By stone, ore whittled down,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And across that pale land
Are those dark ribbons not streets?

Wonder has never yoked them;
The relay of seasons continually haunts,
But where the spectacle of thought
To garner from the wind
One clue to a winter's approach?
Perhaps they have waked too soon.

This is a paradise of mist
With birds like blue
Pilgrims shuddering past,
Without song or specie,
Nameless as those who, for their
Toil, barely observe them.

But one will be driven
To find mountains in sand,
To recognize breath
In the chill dawn air,
And sharing the moon and sun in one eye,
Will divine the ominous plan.

Edward Brash

SHAKING THE PRESIDENT'S HAND

Who'd be likely to forget
His brief squeeze by those brisk fingers,
The First Citizen's! The touch of kings
Was blessed, a gift to remedy
The King's Evil. Here
Where every man's a king,
What did I touch a President to cure?

Daniel Hoffman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I AM HERE WAITING FOR THE SUNRISE"

—Ezra Pound, Canto LXXIX

I am here waiting the sunrise
And the Spring of my 21 years
Disappears with the sea 5 miles
From the span of my hand
And the boats moving into
The night. I am standing waist-high
In the waves, nor is this
Yet natural when I come out
Into the air. Here
No wind is stronger than are
The efforts I make in the boat;
The stroke of the oars
Move me more or less than a day
Whose only right is the power
To change with the clouds.

Gerard Malanga

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joseph Frank

DOSTOEVSKY AND THE SOCIALISTS

No encounter in Dostoevsky's life is more important than his meeting in May, 1845, with the temperamental, passionate and dominating figure of the critic Vissarion G. Belinsky. "Furious Vissarion," as Belinsky was known to his friends, was far more than simply a literary critic in the Russian literary world of the eighteen-forties—or perhaps we should say that he conceived of his criticism, almost by necessity, as an instrument of social enlightenment. In a society where no free expression of opinion was tolerated, Belinsky managed, in his never-ending stream of articles and reviews, to serve as the rallying point for all the impotent discontent and dissatisfaction stirring in the breasts of the Russian intelligentsia. Part of Belinsky's influence certainly came from his alertness and receptivity to any trace of such discontent in the literary productions of the rising young generation, and from his unselfish efforts to recognize and aid talent wherever he found it. One such talent, which he immediately greeted with enthusiastic acclaim, was that of Fyodor Mikhailovitch Dostoevsky.

The external history of this encounter between the two, which Dostoevsky himself narrates in his *Diary of a Writer*, is very well-known. The struggling young author, who shyly turns over the manuscript of his cherished first novel, *Poor Folk*, to his friend Nekrasov; the joyous and boisterous visit to Dostoevsky's apartment, at four in the morning, of Nekrasov and Grigorovitch, unable to contain their excitement over this new masterpiece; the promise to purvey the manuscript to Belinsky by the latter's protégé, Nekrasov; finally, the fateful summons to meet the great man himself, and the thrill of receiving the accolade from the most powerful figure in Russian letters. All this has been repeated over and over again in the inter-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minable outpouring of biographical literature on Dostoevsky, and there is no need once again to do badly, and at great length, what Dostoevsky did superbly with the incisive genius of the great novelist.

But if the essential facts of this meeting are well established and unambiguous in import, the same cannot be said for Dostoevsky's account of Belinsky's influence on his intellectual and spiritual development. Dostoevsky always attributed the greatest importance to this influence, and returned to it again and again in his *Diary of a Writer*; but the more his accounts are studied, the more uncertain and unreliable they become. Dostoevsky attributes ideas and opinions to Belinsky, at the period of their encounter, which the latter did not hold at the time or never held at all (such, for example, as a belief in "the suppression of nationalities"). And while in one article Dostoevsky stresses the connection between atheism and Socialism driven home to him by Belinsky, in another he explains that for the vast majority of the liberal and radical intelligentsia of the forties, Utopian Socialism was considered an "improvement" rather than a substitute for Christianity. Most important of all, Dostoevsky leaves the reader totally in the dark about what *he* was when he met Belinsky, except for the tenderly idyllic portrait of himself as a "dreamer"—though it is difficult to see why a "dreamer" should have written what Belinsky accurately called the first Russian "social" novel in *Poor Folk*.

Despite the numerous inconsistencies in Dostoevsky's account, which have been noted here and there in Russian scholarship, little or no attempt has been made to explore Dostoevsky's relations with Belinsky in detail and with a full utilization of everything we know about the cultural background of the period. To be sure, Soviet scholars have devoted a good deal of attention to this crucial episode in their literary history; but they are more concerned with glorifying Belinsky, who has become one of the major gods in the Russian revolutionary pantheon, than with understanding Dostoevsky. For the most part, these scholars content themselves with amplifying the "beneficial" effects of Belinsky's Socialism on Dostoevsky, and tracing the "valuable" elements in Dostoevsky's later, reactionary novels to the lingering vestiges of this salutary tutelage. Moreover, these critics deliberately blur the nuances of ideological differentiation between various members of the Russian intelligentsia of the forties so as to create the impression of a monolithic revolutionary (even if pre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marxist) movement. The task of clarifying the exact relation between Dostoevsky and Belinsky thus still remains to be done, and in the following pages I shall try to show how a more precise grasp of this relation can give us a new insight into the complexities of Dostoevsky's spiritual formation.

I

Two differing images of Belinsky appear in the pages of Dostoevsky's reminiscences. One is that of the critic who consecrated Dostoevsky's vocation as a writer; and whatever the venomous hatred that Dostoevsky later displayed towards Belinsky's influence on Russian culture, he never forgot the debt he owed to the powerful voice who had first declared his genius. Among all the numerous tributes paid to the memory of Belinsky in the annals of Russian letters, none is more ardent and moving than Dostoevsky's re-creation of what Belinsky had meant to him in the first flush of their meeting. "I left his home in an ecstasy," Dostoevsky wrote in 1877. "I stopped at the corner, I looked at the sky, the sunny day, the passers-by, and I felt with my whole being that I had just lived through a portentous moment, that my life had been transformed forever, that something entirely new had just begun—something I had not foreseen even in my most passionate dreams. (And I was then a passionate dreamer.)" This was, Dostoevsky adds, "the most glorious moment of my life."

Along with *this* image of Belinsky, however, we also find another in Dostoevsky's autobiographical pages and in his letters—the image of a naive, overpowering, tempestuous and morally pure evil genius, whose influence was responsible for leading Dostoevsky (and not Dostoevsky alone) along the path to perdition. "I do not exaggerate at all," Dostoevsky wrote in 1873, "when I refer to the ardent inclination he [Belinsky] had for me, at least in the first months of our friendship." Everything we know from other sources confirms Dostoevsky's account; and our knowledge of Belinsky's character also gives credence to the further assertion that the latter "immediately threw himself, with the most ingenuous eagerness, into the task of converting me to his faith. . . . I found him a convinced Socialist, and he promptly began with me on atheism."

In another essay written the same year (1873), Dostoevsky paints much the same picture and adds more specific details about Belinsky's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"faith." "By 1846," he says, "I had been initiated by Belinsky into the *truth* of this imminent regeneration of the world and of the sanctity of the future Communist society. All these convictions relating to the immorality of the most sacred (Christian) institutions of modern society—the immorality of religion, of the family, the immorality of the right to property—all these ideas relating to the suppression of nationalities in the name of universal fraternity, which required one to despise one's country as an obstacle to evolution, etc., etc., these were influences that we could not overcome, and which, on the contrary, took hold of our hearts in the name of I know not what principle of grandeur." Belinsky is thus given the role of Dostoevsky's "initiator" into all those doctrines that led to the latter's arrest, imprisonment and exile, and whose acceptance followed the rejection of Christ. "During the last year of his life," Dostoevsky says accurately enough, "I did not go to see him a single time [Belinsky died in May, 1848]. . . . He had taken a dislike to me, but I was then passionately following all his teachings."

Certainly the first point to be observed about Dostoevsky's account is that he could hardly have been as innocent a neophyte as he pretends with respect to "Socialism." In those days, especially in Russia, "Socialism" meant little more than a feeling that political liberty was desirable but insufficient, and that something had to be done to redistribute the wealth in favor of the needy and the oppressed. In this sense Dostoevsky had been a "Socialist" long before he met Belinsky, as even a cursory glance at his first novel, *Poor Folk*, is sufficient to prove. Nor could any reader of George Sand have escaped learning about the "imminent regeneration of the world" and the "immorality" of private property, the family, and at least of the official Church (though not of religion *per se*). If nothing else, the attacks on the "Socialism" of contemporary French literature, which constantly appeared in the Russian reactionary journals, would have been enough to convey a fairly adequate notion of the main Socialist tenets. What probably *did* come as a surprise and shock to Dostoevsky, however, was to find Belinsky *both* a Socialist and a violent atheist at the same time ("he promptly began with me on atheism").

The reasons for Dostoevsky's consternation on this score are easily explicable. Utopian Socialism, to be sure, was determinedly anticlerical; and it rejected the Christian morality of asceticism, which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was regarded as a cunning priestly device for keeping the poor contented with their lot. But the early Utopians were anything but atheistic or anti-Christian in principle; on the contrary, they were all profoundly religious both in inspiration and aspiration.

Saint-Simon, at the end of his life, had baptized his doctrine a "New Christianity" based on the Christian principle of love; and the Saint-Simonian school had attempted to found a new religion which, however its doctrines might clash with official morality, was still considered the direct result of divine inspiration. Fourier believed in the immortality of the soul; and the axiom to which he constantly appeals, as the foundation for all his reasoning, is that a loving God would not have endowed man with certain drives if He had not wished them to be satisfied. The ex-Saint-Simonian Pierre Leroux, whose mystagogical ideas received the widest diffusion through the novels of his disciple George Sand, believed in a "religion of humanity" whose fundamental dogma was "equality" and which purported to synthesize the teachings of Jesus Christ and Robespierre. Dostoevsky himself correctly comments that, during the early forties, the "Socialism which had only just then been born was compared to Christianity even by some of its leaders, and considered at most as a modification and improvement of this latter in conformity with the century of civilization." This was the Socialism with which Dostoevsky was already familiar, the Socialism he had embodied in *Poor Folk,* and the Socialism he unquestionably expected to find endorsed by Belinsky heart and soul.

II

Between 1841 and 1845, however, another intellectual influence had begun to make itself felt among the small group of Russian radical intelligentsia whom Dostoevsky had not yet met, and of whose private discussions and cogitations he was almost certainly completely ignorant. This new influence was that of German Left Hegelianism, which began its influential career, culminating in the historical materialism of Karl Marx, by a ruthlessly penetrating critique of religion.

The opening gun in this Left Hegelian campaign was fired in 1835 by D. F. Strauss's *Life of Jesus,* one of the few books that Dostoevsky borrowed from the library of Petrashevsky. For Strauss, Christian dogmas lacked any claim to historical veracity and could

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only be accepted as "myth." Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* caused an even greater furore in 1841, and was far more radical in its secularization of the divine. Taking his departure from Hegel's concept of "alienation," Feuerbach maintained that the idea of God and the dogmas of religion were the expression of man's own essence as a species (not as this or that isolated individual), seen under the aspect of perfection and objectified as a supposed Supreme Being. Religion for Feuerbach was thus positively maleficent, since it concealed the true perfections of man's nature from himself and prevented him from working to attain the real fulfillment of his divine potentialities.

Belinsky heard about Feuerbach's book in March, 1842, almost immediately on its publication (this shows with what close attention the Russian avant-garde were following European developments), and a few chapters were translated for his especial benefit. Herzen, then very close to Belinsky, learned of the book around the same time and immediately became its enthusiastic champion. P. V. Annenkov, in *The Remarkable Decade*, places the zenith of Feuerbach's Russian influence around 1845, the very year in which Dostoevsky met Belinsky. "It may be safely affirmed," he writes "that nowhere did Feuerbach's book have such a shattering effect as in our 'Western' circle, nowhere did it so quickly eliminate all traces of the views preceding it. Herzen, of course, was an ardent interpreter of its ideas and conclusions, linking the revolution it declared in the realm of ideas with that announced by the Socialists in politics—in this respect coinciding with Belinsky."

During the summer of 1845, a crisis occurred among the little group of Moscow Westerners precisely because of disagreements over Feuerbach's atheism. The liberal historian T. N. Granovsky, who later served as model for Stepan Trofimovitch Verkhovensky in *The Devils,* refused to surrender his belief in the immortality of the soul despite Feuerbach and despite all of Herzen's slashing irony; and this caused a rift between the two friends that was never completely healed. Belinsky had made his own position clear in a letter to Herzen in January, 1845—a letter in which we can see how his attitude toward religion had hardened as a result of Feuerbach's teachings.

Shortly after his conversion to Utopian Socialism, under the intellectual auspices of George Sand and Pierre Leroux, Belinsky had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expounded his new ideal in terms that clearly reveal their derivation from the "religion of humanity." "There will be neither rich nor poor, neither kings nor subjects," he wrote in September, 1841, to V. P. Botkin, "there will be brethren, there will be men, and, according to the word of the apostle Paul, Christ will pass his power to the Father, and Father-Reason will hold sway once more, but this time in a new Heaven and above a new world." Much different are his remarks four years later: "In the words 'religion' and 'God,' " he says, with his usual fanatic extremism, "I see darkness, gloom, chains and the knout—and now I like these first two words as much as the four following them."

Dostoevsky thus encountered Belinsky exactly at the moment when the latter was under the strongest influence of Feuerbach's atheism, and when this influence was beginning to replace the religiously inspired doctrines of the French Utopian Socialists. It is interesting to see that Dostoevsky accurately notes this confluence of competing currents in one of his articles. He reports a conversation in which Belinsky begins by arguing that, if Christ were to return to earth, he would be considered in the nineteenth century the most ordinary and insignificant of men. But when a third person present (tantalizingly unnamed, but perhaps Herzen) objects to this depreciation of Christ, and insists that the latter would immediately take his place at the head of the Socialist movement, Belinsky concedes the point and agrees.

"The movers of mankind whom Christ was predestined to join," Dostoevsky writes, "were then the French: especially George Sand, Cabet (today completely forgotten), Pierre Leroux and Proudhon who had just then only begun his career. . . . There was also a German that he bowed down to then—Feuerbach (Belinsky, never having been able to master a single foreign language in his life, pronounced it Fierbach). Of Strauss he spoke with reverence." Dostoevsky's judicious phrasing —both the conjunction and separation of these names—is quite significant: Christ belongs with the French, not the Germans. And Belinsky's own state of mind clearly emerges from the oscillation between his initial contempt for Christ as "insignificant," and then his willingness to agree with the Utopian Socialist opinion that Christ would, in the modern world, have become a leader of the Socialists.

That Dostoevsky disputed vigorously with Belinsky over religion,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as Granovsky did with Herzen at approximately the same moment, is quite clear even from the scanty evidence. In the article we have been citing on the supposed return of Christ, which is obviously one of the sources for the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky portrays Belinsky remarking to the third interlocutor: "I'm really touched to look at him [i.e., Dostoevsky] . . . every time I so much as make an allusion to Christ his whole face changes as if he wanted to cry." The point of this remark is explained in a letter of May, 1871, where Dostoevsky speaks more freely about these discussions than he could do in public print. "That man [Belinsky]" he tells N. N. Strakhov, "insulted Christianity in my presence in the filthiest terms." A more amiable reflection of these disputes may be seen in a fragment of Belinsky's correspondence—an invitation he sent Dostoevsky in July, 1845. "Dostoevsky, my soul (immortal) thirsts to see you," he writes pleasantly. This parenthetical interjection is certainly a playful allusion to one of the key issues in their conversations.

III

To what extent Dostoevsky was shaken in his religious faith—whether or not he literally became an atheist as a result of Belinsky's objurgations—can only remain a matter for conjecture. The evidence on this point is contradictory, and there is no way of coming to any positive conclusion. On the one hand, we have Dostoevsky's own word that he accepted "all" of Belinsky's teachings. On the other, we have his general unreliability as to detail, the evidence of his conflict with Belinsky over the figure of Christ, and the testimony of his friend Dr. Janovsky, which there is no reason to reject, that he and Dostoevsky had fasted together for the Feast of the Ascension in 1847 and 1849.

Moreover, in trying to gauge Dostoevsky's state of mind on this crucial issue, we must always remember that he was susceptible to those nervous and emotional impressions which form the experiential and pristine source of all religious faith. Dostoevsky was constantly haunted by fear of death at this time, and especially by the fear, not so much of actually being dead, as of being considered dead in a deep sleep and buried alive. It is certainly no accident that, in *The House of the Dead*, when he describes for the first time the triumph of frenzied, irrational feeling over reason, he does so with the image of a man who, buried alive, hopelessly struggles to rise from his coffin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dostoevsky was also, as we know, peculiarly sensitive at this time (and perhaps also later) to the effects of twilight and darkness, which plunged him into a mood of melancholy and indefinable anxiety. There is an allusion to this fact in one of his letters from prison in September, 1849. "The difficult days of Autumn are at hand," he remarks sadly to his brother Mikhail, "and with them my hypochondria. Already the sky is getting darker; and the strip of blue sky that one sees from my cell is the guarantee of my health and good spirits." In *The Insulted and Injured*, a novel in which Dostoevsky uses a good many autobiographical details from his life in the forties, there is the description of the onset of such a mood that brings it into at least a quasi-religious focus.

"At the approach of dusk," writes the hero of himself, "I began to fall into the state of spirit which, now that I am ill comes over me so often, and which I have named *Mystic Terror*. This is the most painful and torturing fear of a danger that I cannot define myself, a peril inconceivable and non-existent in the order of things, but which, inevitably, perhaps at this very minute, is going to materialize, as if out of contempt for all the arguments of reason—and which will arise and stand before me as an irrefutable, frightening, monstrous and inexorable fact." No matter how he might choose to explain it, this encounter with the numinous and uncanny, this massive and irreducible question mark of Dostoevsky's sensibility, could hardly be discounted. It is not difficult to imagine that such experiences might pose a permanent and impassable barrier to any acceptance of a totally rational atheism.

However that may be, there can be no question that Belinsky's diatribes did give rise to a profound ferment in Dostoevsky's spirit—a ferment that was only resolved emotionally (if one can truly speak of a resolution in such a case) as a result of his arrest, mock execution and the years of his Siberian exile. It was these awesome events which, in combination with his earlier apprehensions, finally confirmed his conviction of the irrational necessity of faith. But it should not be imagined, as it has invariably and mistakenly been, that Dostoevsky first encountered the problems of God and religious faith only when he became acquainted with their vehement opponent in the person of Belinsky. What probably upset Dostoevsky the most in Belinsky's ideas was the logical rigor and psychological penetration of the new Feuerbachian argument that God was nothing but an alienated and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

illusory image of man's own unrealized perfections. But while this may have shaken Dostoevsky temporarily, it is possible to show how the spiritual education that Dostoevsky had already acquired prepared the way for the conclusions to which he finally came.

One of the strongest impressions made on Dostoevsky's imagination in childhood was that of the Book of Job. "I am reading the Book of Job," he writes his second wife in June, 1875, "and it fills me with a morbid excitement. I throw the book away and walk up and down in my room for hours on end, almost in tears, and without the stupid notes of the translator perhaps I'd be happy. This book, Annette, is a strange thing; it's one of the first that really struck me, I was then almost a child." The mystery of God's manifestations, which transcend human understanding, had thus long left its imprint on Dostoevsky's spirit. And the effect of the Book of Job was certainly strengthened by Dostoevsky's intimate friendship, during his early years in St. Petersburg between 1837 and 1840, with Ivan Shidlovsky. This young poet was not only a Romantic "dreamer," but also—and the two went very well together—a deeply religious personality plagued by doubt and tormented by the problem of evil and suffering. Haunted by thoughts of suicide, Shidlovsky nonetheless struggled to maintain a faith that was his only salvation from catastrophe. "We must believe that God is good," he wrote Mikhail Dostoevsky in January, 1839, "for otherwise he is not God; that the Universe is the visible and tangible beauty of this goodness. . . . Only then does our soul recognize all in itself, winds a spider web of sympathy around the borders of life, and, in the center of the web, embraces God Himself."

Nor should we forget that, in one of his most important early letters, the youthful Dostoevky sets himself up—somewhat confusedly, but all the same significantly—as a defender of *feeling* against an exclusive emphasis on reason as a source of knowledge. His brother Mikhail had written that "to *know* more one must *feel* less"; and Fyodor, obviously drawing sustenance from the pervasive Schellingian atmosphere of the Russian thirties, replies in October, 1838: "What do you mean by the expression 'to know'? To know nature, the soul, God, love . . . It's by the heart one knows them, not the mind. . . . The intelligence, instrument, machine, is driven by the fire of the soul . . . Besides (second point) human intelligence, expert in the domain of the various knowledges, works independently of feeling,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hence of *heart*. If the aim of knowledge is love and nature, there is clearly a place for the human *heart*." None of this makes very much philosophical sense, as Dostoevsky shows himself uneasily aware in breaking off his lucubrations; but this defense of *feeling* as a method of access to knowledge of God (in particular) was to remain one of Dostoevsky's most deeply rooted convictions.

If now we place Feuerbach's doctrines against this background, it is not difficult to grasp the future course of Dostoevsky's inner evolution. For Feuerbach, it should be noted, never denied the importance or the reality of man's emotional *need* for religion. On the contrary, he stressed this emotional need with a deep sympathy, and with a genuine understanding for mankind's instinct to worship its own aspirations. "The fundamental dogmas of Christianity," Feuerbach wrote, "are realized wishes of the heart—the essence of Christianity is the essence of human feeling." But Feuerbach argued that in religion man turns the subjective into the objective, disregards the laws of nature and reason, and simply believes true what he wishes were true.

Man therefore has the choice between believing his feelings, and accepting all the enigmatic and paradoxical consequences which this involves, or denying his feelings and opting for reason. Feuerbach, Marx, the Left Hegelians, Herzen and Belinsky chose to stand with reason; Kierkegaard, whose existential Christianity was as much a response to Feuerbach as to Hegel, chose to push the antagonism between subjective, existential faith and reason to the uttermost point of paradox. The arguments of Feuerbach, as conveyed by Belinsky, thus squarely confronted Dostoevsky with the choice between feeling and reason; and like Kierkegaard, he ultimately chose to take his stand with the existential irrational of feeling.

Contact with Feuerbach's ideas, then, after the first upsetting effects of novelty had worn off, only succeeded, we may speculate, in sharpening and strengthening Dostoevsky's already established conviction of the importance of feeling. To believe in God's goodness, despite all the sufferings one endured, had been for Shidlovsky the mark of man's true greatness; and the acceptance of this paradox certainly made it easier for Dostoevsky to decide to believe emotionally in God and Christ despite all the arguments of reason to the contrary. Dostoevsky's intellectual history thus placed him at the same fateful

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crossroads where so many of the great figures of nineteenth-century European culture finally had to choose their path; and the effects of this encounter with Feuerbach, through the medium of Belinsky, were to be of momentous consequences for Dostoevsky's work. For when Dostoevsky's protagonists reject Christianity, they invariably engage in the impossible attempt to transcend the limits of the human condition, and literally try to incarnate Feuerbach's dream of replacing the God-man by the Man-god.

IV

It has seemed permissible, for purposes of exposition, to discuss the question of Dostoevsky's religion independently of his social convictions; but such a separation is entirely unhistorical in the context of the early nineteenth century. Religion and politics, as we have already indicated, were intimately intertwined; and any shift in religious opinion immediately brought in its wake a corresponding shift in socio-political attitude.

The abandonment of Saint-Simon's "New Christianity" and Pierre Leroux for Feuerbach thus immediately led to a sharp decline in the prestige of all social doctrines based on Christian ideals, and inspired with reverence for the sublime figure and example of Christ. Belinsky's letters during 1847 show him abusively critical of his erstwhile idols, Pierre Leroux and George Sand, and inclining rather toward Comtean positivism and materialism. Both Marx, under the influence of Feuerbach, and Proudhon, probably independently, were rejecting the French Utopians exactly at this moment; and it is likely that Belinsky was influenced by their ideas through the writings and correspondence of his friends. P. V. Annenkov, who knew Marx personally and corresponded with him about Proudhon, wrote a series of *Paris Letters* for Belinsky's magazine *The Contemporary* during the fall of 1846 which were largely a review of current Utopian Socialist doctrines. Here he refers pityingly to the "fantasmagorias" of Cabet and the Fourierist Victor Considerant; calls the theories of Leroux "the farthest extreme of madness to which a noble and virtuous heart can go"; and praises Proudhon for investigating the economic laws of modern society rather than dreaming up impossible Utopias.

Belinsky, then, was rejecting religion *and* the Utopian Socialism it had inspired exactly at the period when he was arguing about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christ with Dostoevsky. And it is only in this perspective that we can truly interpret one of Dostoevsky's most misleading and yet revealing comments about these arguments.

"As a Socialist," Dostoevsky writes, "Belinsky could not help but demolish the teaching of Christ, declaring it a false and ignorant *chelovekolyubie* [literally: love of man, philanthrophy] condemned by contemporary science and economic first principles." By 1873, when Dostoevsky wrote these words, he had long since been convinced that "the teaching of Christ" and Socialism were totally irreconcilable. But no such opinion prevailed in the forties, when Utopian Socialism, on Dostoevsky's own testimony, was looked on as an "improved" Christianity, and when the "teaching of Christ" had been taken by the Utopian Socialists as a guide. It was this "teaching of Christ" which was then being attacked everywhere in Europe, exactly as Belinsky was doing in Russia, in the name of "contemporary science and economic first principles." It was only *this* "teaching of Christ," based on the pure spirit of equality and brotherly love taught by the Gospels, which Belinsky could possibly have described as a *chelovekolyubie*.

Besides, since the attack in question was directed against Dostoevsky, it would be ridiculous to imagine that the latter, the author of *Poor Folk*, was upholding any of the dogmas of Christian theology or any of the official teachings of the Church. Dostoevsky was obviously arguing exclusively in a socio-political context, on the side of the "teaching of Christ" as he *then* understood it—on the side of religiously inspired, pro-Christian, French Utopian Socialism. And once we see the passage in this light we can understand why Dostoevsky should have felt that Belinsky *really* introduced him to Socialism (even if this, as we know, was not literally the case). For Belinsky did introduce Dostoevsky to *atheistic* Socialism, the only kind Dostoevsky later recognized as truly consistent—a Socialism which rejected the "teaching of Christ" as irrelevant and even harmful for the solution of social problems.

Moreover, the evidence of Dostoevsky's life in the next few years would indicate that, regardless of whether he succeeded in making Dostoevsky an atheist, Belinsky certainly did succeed in converting him from the "teaching of Christ" as embodied in Utopian Socialism. For Belinsky's influence probably gave Dostoevsky the first impetus

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that eventually led him to join the most extreme activist group in the Petrashevsky circle, and to agree to take part in a conspiracy designed to bring about a peasant revolt and the establishment of a revolutionary dictatorship. A disillusionment with the "teaching of Christ" in the form of peaceful and non-political Utopian Socialism led Dostoevsky directly into the arms of political terror; and this illuminates his feeling that Belinsky was ultimately responsible for his arrest and exile.

The intellectual and spiritual crisis engendered in Dostoevsky by his encounter with Belinsky was thus of the utmost importance for his life and work. Belinsky caused Dostoevsky both to wrestle with the problem of the existence of God, and, simultaneously, to question the possibility of using Christ's teaching as a guide to social action. Doubts about God were accompanied by despair in the viability of the social message of His Son; and both these doubts were to remain indissolubly linked thereafter in Dostoevsky's sensibility. The inability to believe in God is always accompanied in his work by the inability concretely to love one's fellow-man (*chelovekolyubie*), and by the resort to crime, violence and terror as a substitute in the name of "contemporary science and economic first principles." This had been the dialectic of Dostoevsky's own bitter experience, and he eagerly seized on all the evidence he could later find in the annals of Russian radicalism—there was, it must be admitted, a good deal—to convince his compatriots that the path he had followed was inevitable and predestined once the first fatal step had been taken.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Alan Friedman

THE ANATOMY OF A POET

Coarse? Well, maybe I am. One of the magazines called me a "coarse old lady poet." I won't argue the point. Naturally, I got coarser as I grew older, like most of you. I don't mean only my indecent turn of mind, which comes automatically with age; I mean those mannerisms which even lady poets develop and which never get into print: I can rarely eat without getting food all over my mouth. And these days whenever I eat anything I really enjoy, I make a sharp whining involuntary noise under my chewing—I can hardly control it. And the smell of my feet, which has gotten stronger with age like cheese—well, would it really shock you if I said I like it? I think not, at least not if you've reached my age. But just in case, I want to warn you: even if you happen to have read some of my verse and thought the sweet-and-sour of it to your taste, prose is another matter. For I think you'll agree with me that it isn't life itself which is coarse, but the way in which it's experienced. And though I've always written about my life in poetry, I experienced it, so to speak, in prose—physically and corruptly.

For example, the first time I wrote a poem I was very troubled by the problem of rhyme (I was eight years old) and I was scratching my behind all during the composition. I remember it distinctly because my Uncle Lemmie (dead a long while now. The only thing I remember about him is that he was always pushing a garden wheelbarrow. When other children talked about their fathers' Fords, I used to brag that my Uncle Lemmie pushed me around in a wheelbarrow) saw me scratching and told me that little ladies didn't,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not anywhere. He lowered the handles of the wheelbarrow gravely as he said it, sat down on the bench beside me, and began tenderly braiding my hair. "What're you doing, Millie?" he said.

"Writing a poem. What rhymes with fire?"

"Lots of things. Tire, or fire . . ."

"I've already got fire."

"Well, then spire."

We were sitting across the street from my house. Inside through the porch windows I could see my father reading the Sunday paper, and my mother playing the piano, and over by the cellar door the smoke which seemed to be coming from the garden where my uncle had been gathering dead leaves and burning them. I had a school copybook on my lap and a pencil in the hand that wasn't scratching. My knees, sticking out beyond the hem of my skirt, were dirty as usual, this time with coal dust, and I moved the copybook cautiously along my skirt with the tip of the pencil while my uncle was busy with my hair, to cover my knees. He said, "How come you're writing poetry?"

"Because I've got something extra important to say to Mommy and Daddy. And I can't use spire."

"Well, let me see what you got so far."

I want to tell you right away
About a big red fire,
That if you want the house to stay
You've got to

His breath smelled while he pondered the verse over my shoulder. "That's not bad," he said. "What about *in*-spire?"

I gave it some thought and shook my head.

"*Per*-spire?"

"Uncle Lemmie," I rebuked him, "this is serious. I was down in the cellar before, and if they don't call the fire engines soon, we won't *have* a house. There's a whole pile of Daddy's old newspapers caught fire from the stove."

What with Daddy running with water buckets in a minute or two and Mommy screaming and Uncle Lemmie and my brother breaking the fire alarm box and calling the fire engines, and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

firemen pulling hoses all over the porch, the poem never got finished. But when the firemen, chopping and dousing away, had saved about three-quarters of the house, Daddy said, "What the *hell* was she writing poetry for?" And Mother hit me hysterically in the back of the head and said, "Why didn't you tell us?" But even after Uncle Lemmie had explained about the rhyme, they didn't understand.

Now I believe that the act of poetry is always utilitarian. For *them,* of course, my wanting to communicate in poetry at all, and my searching so hard for the perfect rhyme to do it with, remained —forever—a purpose mysterious, rankling, insolubly perverse. But that was because I never told them that it was I who had set the fire.

I was a fat little girl—wretchedly fat. In the photographs I have, I look blonde, bloated, and worried. There was so much of me that I thought I was a freak, and I was preoccupied with my physical being—in fact, my earliest memories are not of people at all, but of sensations. A deeply buried excitement as of a smaller body within my own body, gradually expanding to giant proportions —that's the earliest. It happened only during absolute darkness, silence, rest, probably as I was falling asleep in my crib, and came of itself, like grace. Something within me formed and grew—swelling, swelling out of all belief, doubling, tripling the limits of my already puffed tiny body as I lay overpowered and rigid, exulting unpardonably in my size but helpless with the fear that any moment I would burst.

Another—a burning sensation which began in the mouth and ran quickly through the rest of me, inside and out, as though I were on fire—happened only once, I think, in infancy, but recurred in later life quite often, in moments of feared passion, usually as a prelude to lovemaking. (According to my mother it can be traced back to my first summer, to the time my father drew the water for my bath. He had boiled the water on the stove and added it to the basin, assuming my mother would add cold as needed. She assumed that he had already adjusted the temperature, and proceeded to add me, instead. I screamed in time as my heel went in, and the result was only a kind of reverse Achilles' heel, a blister which became a permanent tough scar. But in my own opinion this episode can't account for the flaming sensation I remember, and later on have experienced again, since this always begins in the mouth.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My father was a lawyer, a tiny man with a moustache that looked phony and big ears with tufts of hair growing in them. His voice was unbelievable. People who heard him speak for the first time, only a few words of trivial conversation, were invariably shocked: that out of such a tiny man, under the suddenly arched lip and moustache, broke a voice like an overloaded loudspeaker, metallic, compelling, and deeply annoying. Perhaps that was why his legal successes were cerebral ones, triumphs of the office rather than the court. Still, he believed with passion in forensic skill and he began training my older brother Sander from early childhood in public speaking—heading him for the bar and, I suppose, Congress. He used to have Sandy stand up at the table after dinner every night to speak extemporaneously for five minutes to all of us (though Mother usually left in obvious boredom) on whatever topic my father chose. These were usually matters of childhood interest, though later, as Sandy grew older, they became wider in scope, political or philosophical. Often, however, they were topics of mere absurdity. Indeed my father claimed that—for practice—the best subjects in the world on which to sharpen the teeth of logic and persuasion were those to which no reasonable man could listen. They would serve Sandy later, he claimed, like the weights carried by the Spartans or the stones in Demosthenes' mouth.

I recall in particular one of the absurd topics on which Daddy insisted Sandy speak, because it made, at the time, an almost mystical impression on me. I was four years old and Sandy was nine and he spoke with all the eloquence he could muster (which by that time was plenty) on the proposition that the sun was really the moon. I listened with my cheek on the table. Sandy stood by his chair as usual, alternately leaning on the table with curled fingers and standing back from it, pushing the blond hair off his forehead, squinting one eye sometimes while he spoke, blowing his nose once or twice and picking it, and pointing a subtle finger at the moon. "You say you can see for yourself. But how good are your eyes? At that distance anyone could make a mistake, couldn't they? The evidence is suspicious right off. Even if every *one* of you thinks it's the sun, in China they all think they're standing on top of the world. And the earth looks flat, doesn't it? What we need is people with an open mind because the cards are stacked—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Facts," Daddy coached loudly, motioning with his toothpick at Sandy's pocket. "I have here."

"I have here reports from ten top scientists, disagreeing with each other about what the sun is made out of, and if those scientists can't agree, it's up to us. They say they have to look at it in an eclipse. Well, we ought to bring the thing down and have it looked at in broad daylight. And we could too, if they weren't spending all our money and keeping us cooling our heels out here in the outfield, trying to tell us what to do—"

"Drive it home!"

"It's up to every one of you to decide in his own heart. That poor moon might be up there all this time, every day, and everybody thinking it was the sun."

"No good," Daddy carped. "You missed the point: the sun *is* the moon."

I was shivering with attention and overwhelmed by what I had heard. Were they seriously proposing that the sun *was* the moon? Or were they proposing that the two ought to be changed, could be changed? I lay with my cheek on the table, rigid with wonder.

Though not the first, this was one of my earliest exposures to the idea of transformation, which as the critics have noted, recurs often in my poetry, and without which I would never have risked the daring realism of utterly transforming myself into what otherwise—for all the hacks and quacks around—would have remained only potential in me for a lifetime. "It's all relative" is the cant phrase you hear now even in grocery stores or on park benches. And "It's all in your point of view"—far too easy, isn't it, and any honest man, if pushed, will admit it's not quite true. One's point of view—the eyes of the beholder—can't *really* transform a thing. An additional step, a tougher and solider adventure is needed before you can have transmutation, or crime, or poetry.

In any case, for years, Sandy used to practice a rhetoric of sophistication and deceit (the kind he later used so successfully to have his way with me), while I listened, rapt with admiration and jealous of his skill and intelligence. I never managed to realize that the five years' difference in our ages, by which he kept exactly the same distance ahead of me all the time, had anything at all to do with it; he seemed unreachably brilliant and beautiful: his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sharp features, his freckles, his skinny boy's body. I wanted his mind and body for my own. I raged and desired him unconditionally. And certainly no little girl's wishes were ever answered so unconditionally.

"You never know what's underneath," my father said to quiet me. It's the very earliest memory I have of him. He had taken me to the matinee at a local theater one Saturday—a kind of vaudeville performance for children. On stage a troupe of dancing animals snarled back at the trainer's whip, and the audience of children was uneasy. "You never know," my father said, his hand on the back of my neck, soothingly. I was three and a half. When the biggest animal of all came down off the stage—a lion, I suppose, though to me he was only Animal—and began to climb through the theater over the empty rows up front, the children panicked. From where I sat toward the side, he seemed to be climbing over the audience, his paws on their heads. Still, I kept quiet. He came fourfootedly up the center aisle and paused, the audience shrieking and backing away. To calm them, he sat back on his haunches and proceeded to slit his throat, from his furry chin down—out came a man's head: I screamed—down to his groin: a man's body: I screamed louder.

What terrified me then, and always has, is not the beast in man, but the man in the beast. Look at the person nearest you this moment and you'll see what I mean. The emergence of man from animal is always half complete: I see him standing there, cheap actor, one leg out of the fur forever. Our history only repeats the first man's history. When he stepped out completely and shook the dead golden rag on the floor, I went wild. I screamed hysterically for almost ten minutes, my father trying to stop me in the lobby with loud, reasonable arguments. And let me mention that later on, one of the most soul-terrifying moments I've ever had (the resultant short poem, "Boy, You Theban Beast," is one of my most celebrated) came to me when I looked at my brother, then grown old, and saw that in fact he was not a beast.

My brother, five years more interested than I was in "what's underneath," took me under the bed one day when I was four and he was nine to find out. "Let's swap," he said. "You look, I look." I had no particular objection, but he added, "Give and take, that's the way the world works." In the midst of a very thorough explora-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion, he announced himself disappointed. "What a gyp! This is no trade—there's nothing here."

I got quite used to this sort of examination in childhood. I underwent a number of them, and reactions were always the same. I always remained quite passive and uninterested myself. It was only the last, performed by a gynecologist when I was sixteen, which —as the reader will see—excited me, as Keats said of Cortez, with a vast surmise.

One apprentice publicityman offered in trade his really long appendicitis scar and I accepted. A group of robber barons stopped me in the park and offered to gouge and club me with the blades of their iceskates if I didn't immediately lift up my skirt and take down my pants. Their enthusiasm puzzled me. I considered refusing, because it was already getting dark, a late winter afternoon, and I was afraid I might be cold. But it seemed to me I recognized them. The bushes into which I had been pushed were part of the small park grounds of the Children's Museum, where I had gone with friends after school. After the others left, I had stayed behind to see an exhibition of sculpture and lantern slides about the facts of birth and anatomy, entitled "Nature's Miracle." I had seen the same group of boys with iceskates in the auditorium, I knew. And though their approach was odd, the idea of being asked to take my small part in the exhibition of a miracle seemed reasonable. Patiently, I complied. One of the young toughs said wearily, "See, what'd I tell ya."

Mother raised a great cry when I told her. "Eight years old!" she wailed. She called Daddy at the office, but he wasn't in. Then she took me around the corner to the police station and raised a great cry there. I was staggered when we were given a patrol car and two policemen to search for the boys. We toured the neighborhood: I had been at ease in the park but I was frightened in the patrol car. We slowed up past every group of boys on the streets, especially those with iceskates, and I began to think it would soothe everybody if I merely pointed my finger at no matter whom. The policeman kept saying, "There, kid?" and Mother kept threatening, "When I get my hands on them. . . ." But looking closely, I saw that her eyes were shut, and this disturbed me. The odd part of this ride was that we actually did come across the boys—I recognized in particular the one who had insulted me by being bored with my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

miracle. But something about Mother's eyes being closed, as though upon her own private version of the deed, warned me and stopped me. I said nothing at all.

It was a habit of hers. She had large eyes, and she kept them closed a lot of the time, when she was playing the piano, or when she was just sitting, and under the taut lids you could see her eyeballs moving. I felt she was never of this moment or in this room. And then the upper surfaces of her forearms were covered with fine black hair; I used to struggle when she hugged me, as though I were being dragged backward in time against my will. Hugging me, she would tell me long stories of the slums in which she had lived as a girl until Daddy found her, of the nuns who gave cocoa and graham crackers to the girls every Wednesday, of the pitiful dresses she had had to wear. (She made lovely dresses for me, of taffeta and embroidered cotton, with crinoline slips often, and little aprons, of which I was very proud, partly because I thought they helped hide my stout shape.) And we laughed regularly and immoderately together whenever she told how she once spit from the third floor landing of a great marble library staircase onto the glittering bald pate of a gentleman in the lobby, because she admired its gleam so. At the "splat" of the hit, which sound she imitated, we shrieked.

There was a strange absence of logic in Mother, or the presence of a personal anti-logic, which appealed to me when I was extremely young, but which began to disturb me even by the time I was seven. Once, I recall, she was washing the dishes with her eyes closed and broke a plate; she walked across the room to where Sandy was quietly reading, and slapped him hard, telling him he talked too much—which was certainly true.

I pondered Mother a long while, and more as I grew older. Father and Sandy trying with their arguments to sew up our daily life with the threads of persuasion; Father trying with his law practice to spin the affairs of men generally, and crime in particular, into a cocoon of rules and consequences; and Mother, with her eyes closed and a flick of her hand, destroying their webs. I have always pretended (even to myself) to be of Father's and Sandy's party, trying to trap life in the nets of my own reason and expression—especially in the poorer parts of my poetry, but also in talking to friends, and even in thinking alone—but I see now that I have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been deeply and upsettingly committed to Mother all along. When I wrote my first poem of warning and kept searching for the rhyme, I was only pretending to be on their side; I was on her side when I set fire to the house. But I'm not proud to admit it—because whenever I try to remember Mother, I see her in the patrol car, her eyelids gripped on revenge.

On the street all the way home from the police station she kept hugging me, every few feet; she kept it up even after we got home until I began to think that, without knowing it, I had really been injured in some way which she wouldn't tell me about. I began to cry. I was still crying when Daddy came home and we told him. He got incensed for a while, and then relaxed into, "So they were checking on science, were they?" and finally concluded, "Boys will be boys." Mother was shocked. She wanted to alert the school authorities and the papers. But Daddy kept the calmer view. "Boys!" he boomed vastly, blotting out with that loud monosyllable all questions of right and wrong, blame or tears. "Kid stuff!" Sandy mimicked intensely, studying me.

It was about this time that I began to get a bit thinner—more boyish, I felt, with immense pleasure—and began to chase, in desperate tomboy style, after Sandy and his friends. Most of the time they managed to elude me, or they teased me with games that demanded feats physically impossible for me. One summer day, with me at the tag end, Sandy led the pack on a chase of Follow the Leader—jumping from high walls, swinging from trees, climbing over barbed wire fences. On the last of these I tore both the hem of my skirt and my calf: a ragged, bloody cut behind and below the knee. I still have that scar too. He took me back to the house and treated the wound with cotton and iodine while I sat and writhed in a chair in the living room. There was no one else at home. I still remember how dark the living room was with the blinds drawn, and the smell of the iodine which I thought was the smell of my blood, and Sandy's blue hat which he had debonairly tossed under the piano after wiping his fingers all over it to get the blood off them. I was crying. To quiet me (I thought), he said anxiously, "Would you like me to show you what grownups do at night?"

I must have sensed that there was something wrong because I immediately began crying louder, quite deliberately. Obviously, how-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever, he had already given his plans much thought. He replied as if I had raised an anticipated objection. Resourcefully, he began drying my eyes with my braids, "There, there. You're never too young to learn. You're a clever girl, but you lack initiative."

He was almost fourteen years old, and the power of his rhetoric was by now formidable. I made no attempt to engage in debate. I adjusted my skirt which he had raised much too high to treat my leg (I suddenly noticed), and started putting on the sock and shoe which he had removed because they were wet with blood. "I want to go out again and play," I said.

"That's the trouble with you girls. You want to grow up to be wives and mothers without the responsibilities of training for a profession. No wonder so many of you fail. Until the day you marry, you refuse to start practicing. It's all play with you, isn't it? You've got to take your responsibilities more seriously."

The best I could manage was the childish, "You think you're so smart, don't you!" But it was I who thought it, and a lot more: radiant with his messy blond hair tufted over his ears, enviably slender, and manly, and graceful, and above all earnest and sensitive —with shadowy eyes and encyclopedic lips. "My leg still hurts," I said.

Singlemindedly, he continued, "Where do you expect to learn—" this said scornfully—"from books, from hygiene classes, from pajama party bull sessions? There's no substitute, I tell you, for the school of hard knocks. Experience is the best teacher, and practice makes perfect."

"Let go," I complained, because by now he had his hand under my skirt, and I began to have the first clear idea of what we had been talking about. I got up.

"All right, Millie," he said gravely, "let's be realistic. How do you want to learn about this? From Mommy and Daddy?"

The thought was embarrassing. "I'm going out to play," I repeated.

"And when? Do you want to have to wait till you're my age to find out?" That really gave me pause: waiting five years seemed an unimaginable strain.

"And then do you want to have to learn from strangers?" He had obviously saved his trump for last. I thought of all the little boys of my acquaintance. "What do I have to do?" I said cautiously.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But for all his brave arguments, he had only the mistiest ideas (I realized much later). In the darkness of the living room, standing and gyrating and almost hopping forward across the rug, we performed together a weird and ritualistic dance, based on his strenuous imagination and the observation of dogs. This way and that he turned me, making certain piston-like motions of his own, which frightened me and left him confused, but pleased at his daring. Finally he tied my shoelace for me and picked up his hat and we went out to play Follow the Leader again with his friends.

That evening, while Mother changed the Band-Aid, he stayed in the room listening to see if I would say a word about what had happened, and we were both flushed the whole time. Still frightened, I said nothing. After dinner, at Daddy's suggestion, Sandy delivered a fervent oration on the topic, "Firecrackers in the Hands of Children."

Gradually from that day on I began to hate Mommy and Daddy for making no attempt to interfere with us or stop us. I never allowed myself to realize that it was I who prevented them with my utter silence—How could they expect *me* to tell them? I thought. The only attempt I did make to tell occurred the next morning: I set fire to the house—and more, I tried words too, the very best words I knew—

I want to tell you right away
About a big red fire,
That if you want the house to stay
You've got to

but nobody understood. So I abandoned poetry, and didn't try again until my teens.

And so, from that rude beginning in the living room grew a strange and unexpected vine: a slow, childish, and extremely delicate courtship. Sandy, sensing my resistance, became hesitant in his attempts, almost meditative, as though considering my age and our relationship. ("Wouldn't it be easy for me, Millie," he said, "to abuse the trust of my little sister? We have to keep this on the highest plane.") Though I found his new interest in me repulsive, his words distracted me. Did they not ring out with the authority I associated with Daddy at the dinner table? The serpentine logic, the fluent nonsense, confused me. Once when I protested his unbuttoning the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back of my dress he said bewilderingly, "Silence is the golden rule, remember? Do unto others silently—in ethics and in the deep moments." It seemed to me that I did remember something like that. Still I screamed—at half volume—and he desisted, commenting, "The exception proves the rule." It was all over my head.

But little by little as I realized the power I had over him, my ancient, poignant desire to have his sinuous mind and thin, freckled body for my own, and thus to triumph over him, seemed within reach. Though I was frightened, he was offering them to me—always tactful and considerate—"your respect, Millie, has to come first"—until I began both to want him and to love him as the World's Treasure. Yet so slow were we that we did not actually consummate our feelings for three years, until I was eleven, and even then it was a most gentle consummation, and certainly not a real penetration, partly because Sandy could never quite figure out how to manage, and partly because of my physical abnormality—of which more later.

Generally we waited until we were alone at home in the evening, which happened occasionally, and then I would shower or bathe, and Sandy would wash me. Or sometimes, even when my parents were home, I would go into his room and sit next to him while he studied his Latin or mathematics. You may doubt me when I say that he really studied, but he had great powers of concentration and won all sorts of school prizes in both Latin and mathematics, possibly because I encouraged his love for them. I came, in fact, to marvel at his capacity for simultaneous interest, the daring heights to which his intellectual and sexual excitement could hurl itself at both extremes, brain and groin (Quem ad finem sese effrenata iactabit audacia?). When in my later poetry or the very few essays I've had occasion to write, I speak of "completing the man" or

> *The easy sweet of the banana*
> *Split: ends of herself in heaven and hell*
> *Bent double*

I think back to the evenings with Sandy. Searching in his clothes with love, I felt that I helped to create, at least in its more godly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aspect, his sexual organ. Even today, I don't think I was really wrong about that. Some of the bewildering enigmas about how things get created—both in the universe of physics and in that of art—later seemed clearer to me: the tense forces released in the approach and separation of opposites; the paralyzed shimmering when they are put unstably together. But for the reader who may remain shocked, despite all philosophical reflection, by the story of my brother and me, I'll add—for your most serious consideration—that it was precisely these years of incest which in the long run kept me from the terrible perversions of homosexuality.

During this period, my face thinned, my features became clear and delicate, my body lengthened. Unreasonably, I suspected that I owed all of these changes to Sandy, as though by his attentions he had given me a new physical being. My gratitude was inwardly slavish. I thought of very little else except of him. I was utterly uninterested in school, other girls, boys. Only the things Sandy said to me seemed important, though I must admit that that was partly because they seemed mysterious. Once he rattled off: "Politics makes strange bedfellows, too. But there's something very satisfying about that. After all, we need the illusion of democracy, though I suppose it's only a question of whether we want to be ruled by the same few or a changing few." He was tucking me in for the night at the time. I didn't sleep for hours, puzzling over what he meant.

Another evening, while he was working away at his biology assignment, I remember that he commented, "We are just the beginning, you and I, the single cell. We're the binary fission of ourselves, out of which will later come the more highly developed forms of life and specialized reproduction."

I never forgave him for going away to college. I was desolate. But the night before he left he sneaked into my room, and for the first time we spent the entire night cushioned together, like two Egyptian brother-sister princelings in a temple over the Nile, watching the river of clouds through my window—tearless and serious and dignified at parting, as befits royalty. "Since I'm going away," Sandy mused out loud in his endless peroration, "let's make it an entering wedge. It has to stop some time—"

"Does it? There'll be summers."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No. It has to stop. Millie, you're going to become a woman—"

"Will I?" I said wistfully. I was almost thirteen.

"Of course. We'll be man and woman, grown and separate. And I suppose we'll be embarrassed when we look back, but let's not regret it. After all, we made the choice. Now we've got to make other choices—"

"Construct other choices," I corrected him ironically—the first time it had ever entered my head to correct him, or to be ironical. I was awed at myself.

Desperately, I began writing verse again—filled a whole year's diary with girlish love poems, pleading with him for his affection. Impatiently I kept waiting for his first summer vacation. But he was as good as his word and when he did come back, he remained irreproachable, unapproachable. After he left again for the second year, I succumbed to endless nighttime imaginings of his presence in my bed.

With a good deal less interest I kept waiting to become a woman, as a kind of consolation, never forgetting that Sandy had seemed to promise it to me. I was already rather pretty, blonde and graceful, and as thin as a young girl should be. But I was worried because by that time I should also have been adolescent. I began to think that nature was spitefully withholding my maturity from me on account of my precocious adventures with my brother. I was already fourteen and terribly conscious whenever I undressed with the other girls during swimming periods at school that I was childishly hairless and flatchested. It seemed to me that for purely physical and therefore unfair reasons, the other girls were automatically relegating me to the position of social failure; I resented it.

When Sandy came home the second summer, I consulted him, hoping also to tempt him by making him touch me where I was flat. Mocking me goodnaturedly, he said, "Let's construct a choice for you, Millie." So he carved a pair of sponges into the proper shape, and when school came round again in the fall, on his advice I dropped swimming classes and began wearing my womanhood inside a brassiere. The result was immediate and it shocked me: I had more invitations than I could accept. Since except for Sandy, I wanted to keep the boys at a distance but at the same time wanted the ap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pearance of social success, the solution was painless. Of course whenever I was taken to the movies I was dreadfully afraid of detection all the time and went so far as to dip the points of the sponges into a bit of mucilage, which then soaked up and hardened inside the sponge like nipples. Although the imitation was hardly accurate, the boys, in their ignorance, accepted it gladly, and in the darkness they pressed and compressed the sponges until they exhausted themselves, while I enjoyed the evening in perfect freedom, sensationless. When a hand strayed to my leg, an occasional slap on the wrist was all that was needed; they returned happily to what I was willing to give. In that way for some time I enjoyed my triumph—as word spread among the boys at school—without yielding one breath of my devotion to Sandy.

In fact, I was well over sixteen before my breasts began to come up naturally—small and soft and perfect, just as they should have been, I supposed—but at the same time a fine blonde down began to come out on my face. At first it was only on the upper lip, then later on the cheeks and chin, but I began to have visions of becoming the bearded lady of the circus, as my earliest fears of being a freak were revived. I wanted to shave off the down; but Mother said that that would only encourage it, and sent me to a doctor. The doctor said it might pass of itself, but if it didn't, he could take the hairs out electrically. At first I refused to consider that. But when my voice began to get distinctly hoarse and a bit foggy, so that I began to be noticed with laughter at school and even Daddy made fun of me sometimes, booming out at me with that exploding voice of his, I went into virtual seclusion for a time, trying to decide. Mortified, I pleaded the onset of painful menstruation —which was utterly untrue. But with a little modest artifice here, too, I even convinced Mother.

I stayed in my bedroom for almost seven days, meditating and deciphering. It seemed to me clear that nature was at last completing its vendetta against incest, and that I had been selected as the object of a monstrous sexual revenge. The more I thought, the more certain it seemed. But I determined to consult a specialist.

Pleading continued illness, I persuaded Mother to make an appointment with a gynecologist; in order to go alone, I called the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doctor secretly, changed the time of the appointment from afternoon to morning. When Mother was out, I dressed, trying to make myself look as mature and feminine as possible. I chose my most daring dress, I put on silk stockings and heels, I pinned up my hair, and I wore a little hat of Mother's with a blue dotted veil.

At the doctor's I was earnest and decorous, confident of the effect of my clothes. At first, the doctor himself struck me as a dapper salesman, a smooth-talking hawker; later, during the examination, he struck me as a brute. Without the slightest consideration for the embarrassed feelings of a sixteen-year-old girl in her first pelvic examination, he treated me as he would have treated any other patient. But when I was ready, reclining on the table with my knees wide, I realized that there could be no mistake, and the thought comforted me with the promise of finality. The doctor was saying, "Nothing to worry about if a girl matures late . . . yes, there *is* some underdevelopment here . . . arrested uterus . . ."

He sat down suddenly and put his hand to his heart.

"Am I all right, doctor?" I said, afraid to move. "Or am I a boy?" It was more than a question—it was a chorus of conviction.

"Don't move, Miss," he said, short of breath, as if he thought I were going to fade like a miracle. And in a moment he was back to the examination, palpating my abdomen.

Doctors all over the country soon became familiar with the details of my case, since several studies of my anatomy subsequently appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* as well as other medical publications in Britain and America. Briefly, the medical picture was this: not only did I have the female organs with which I had been born, still in an infantile condition; I also had, retracted and sealed in vaginal tissue, the organs of the male sex, by now fully adolescent and, so to speak, trapped. As the doctor himself put it, moments after he had finished examining me, "You're not a boy, Miss," and he was sweating when he said it. "You're also a boy."

For weeks, specialists examined my "miracle." I was, they told me, a true hermaphrodite, a "genetic accident" known not only to the annals of modern science, but known from the testimonies of ancient art and literature to have appeared now and again

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

throughout history and all over the world. But today, they said, it was another matter. In our society a true hermaphrodite was impermissible—and besides, correctable. The two possibilities were clear. Would I like to have my newfound male organs cut away surgically, and my female organs brought to full maturity with hormones? Or conversely: would I like to have my manly parts released to their normal position, and my uterus and ovaries cut away? "It's up to you, Millie." Me? "You or your parents," they said. "Take your choice—male or female."

Although the full complexities were not clear to me for weeks, still, even in those first ten minutes after I learned the truth, I realized that I was a lot less confused than the doctor; all my experience had made it possible for me to grasp without vertigo the news of my sexual fusion. I had the uncanny impression that I had actually transformed myself—into a freak, if you will—by an alchemy of illicit desire. And that I was now hopelessly triumphant: I was to be deprived of Sandy forever. Getting dressed again in the doctor's office, fixing the garters to my silk stockings and slipping my heels back on, I began to search for a way back.

That same night, I discussed the doctor's visit with my shaken parents for five difficult hours. Daddy's voice seemed to lose its spring; his steeltrap mind opened limply. "Millie darling," he whispered, "you won't let them . . . alter you . . . would you?" I vowed in a horrified baritone that I wouldn't let them take my womb. Fiercely, Mother kept sobbing, "We'll sue the doctor." They phoned. They hung up. Unanimously and desperately they pleaded with me to remain their daughter. But I will say this to their credit: they left the choice to me.

I said goodnight—for the first time without kissing them—and went to bed. I sat on the edge. I had equalled Sandy, and in doing so, lost him. But it wasn't irreversible. I slipped off my heels—unhooked my garters—pulled down one stocking—and instead of going to sleep, took up a pencil. The words, the lines, seemed to force themselves lovingly on me, as if I had to hold my twin self visibly at arm's length from me on paper to decide. It was the work of a sixteen year old girlboy, addressed to her lost-and-found brother.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Out of the sun I lived with you in trust
A double son in dark might each be proud,
Revolve in you (my girlish moon must
Fold its song, no longer loud),
Serene your single orbit bring me birth.
But now my spectral dust
To dust—and yours the mirth—
Must quite alone unwind its shroud
And bring a squeaking man on earth.

It was almost light when I woke up. I read the lines over several times, and saw that I had decided. I had chosen, at the very least, to become a poet. I would have to learn to seem outwardly beyond the reach of doubt—daring, energetic, and perhaps (to be absolutely safe) coarse. With the disguise of surgery, I could parade my hard-won maleness. But for myself—with poetry as my ruse and my salvation—I would keep my double sex physically intact. A public man with a private womb. My transmutation, my twinning—I would not give up one iota.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VARIETY

IN PRAISE OF FOLLY

Michel Foucault published as his doctoral thesis a remarkable work on madness, *Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique*.[1] Madness has been the subject of countless studies—medical, psychological, sociological and literary—but it has rarely been the subject of a history. The first virtue of Michel Foucault's book is to treat insanity as a variable that each society perceives in a different manner. His study belongs to the school of history-writing that considers all forms of perception—mental and sensory—as belonging to a particular time and place; Foucault, although he never mentions them by name, continues the tradition of Lucien Febvre, Marcel Bloch and the present contributors to *Annales*. *Histoire de la Folie* gives back to history what has too often been left to the sciences of classification (medical or social), and demonstrates that madness, like any other form of human behavior, is a product of a culture and not part of a fixed order. At the same time, without ever departing from the most rigorous historical framework, Foucault treats his subject as a philosopher who sees the relation between reason and unreason as the determining factor in our knowledge of man. In this perspective, madness functions as a complement to rational discourse, without which knowledge is incomplete. The unusual quality of this work lies in the combination of these two approaches, the historical and the existential.

As a history this work deals with the treatment of madness in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France, although it spills over into neighboring periods and countries (Foucault includes a chapter on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and follows parallel developments in England and Germany). It takes as point of departure the edict of

1 *Histoire de la Folie à l'âge classique* was published by Plon in 1960; an abridged version, entitled *Madness and Civilization* will be put out by Pantheon. Mr. Foucault, professor of philosophy at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, is also the author of *Maladie mentale et psychologie, Naissance de la clinique* and a study of Raymond Roussel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1657, which founded the *Hôpital Général* in Paris for the incarceration of "indigent beggars." This act established a form of confinement that grouped together without distinction the poor, the sick, the criminal and the demented. In the years that followed, a portion of the population, to which previous generations had grown accustomed, was sequestrated, as if its presence had suddenly become detrimental to the proper functioning of society. Foucault traces, in the texts of hospital records, court judgments and parliamentary acts, the successive definitions by which the community, through its official spokesmen, identified those that were to be excluded. In this process the mad lost the characteristics by which they had been known and became, for the first time, indistinguishable from the larger category of the unproductive.

On first reading, these groupings appear, by turn, ignorant, cruel, or simply naive. To a psychiatrist they might appear as the uncertain first steps of a science still in its infancy. To Foucault they are something quite different: if the legislators and judges of the classical period made no distinction between the economically, the bodily and the mentally deprived, it was not a confusion, but a deliberate attempt to assimilate them to each other. Disparate though the symptoms might appear, they were subsumed under a common heading—that of being fit for internment. Madness is not defined in terms of a fixed human nature; the definition is inseparable from the social attitudes excluding madness.

Here we encounter the central problem of such a study. A history of madness is a paradoxical undertaking, since madness appears to lie outside history. What better definition of folly is there than that which would see in it an absence? Words, yet an absence of language, gestures, yet an absence of works; behavior, in short, that lies in a senseless, timeless region. To be sure, Foucault has gone to the words of the mad themselves as they appear in contemporary documents, but this irrational language is always framed in the context of a rational discourse, whether it be that of judge, doctor, or casual observer. While following closely these "objective" accounts, Foucault makes us aware that they give us but one side of a confrontation between reason and unreason, in which the other term of the couple is condemned to silence. A history of the insane, in that it is written by the sane, is necessarily partial. It is in attempting to overcome the impossibility of such a history that Foucault displays his originality, for in every definition that he examines (medical, legislative, judicial) he brings the discusson back to the point at which madness is separated from common experience; he interprets the successive acts of segregation not as the gradual recognition of a permanent aspect of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man's behavior but as a forming process that has created a new image of the mad. As such, *Histoire de la Folie* might serve as a model for those histories in which documents have to serve as the reflections of a state that is itself without a coherent language.

The practice of confinement as established by the edict of 1657 is not, in Foucault's analysis, an isolated phenomenon but part of the total structure of society. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the mad, inasmuch as they were one of the images of man's misery on earth, were occasion for charity and thus stimulated a Christian virtue. As a constant reminder of the imperfections of this world, they provided a link to the next. When, in the seventeenth century, the state and not the individual assumed responsibility for them, the mad were treated not as spiritually beneficial but as possible sources of contagion from which the body politic should be isolated. Thus a treatment of madness was invented that denied any connection between folly and the human condition, and glorified the animal nature of the insane. Madness was transformed into a spectacle, and the madhouse into a theater. When the visitors to the houses of correction (whether they were prisons, hospitals, or private institutions) witnessed the antics of the insensate, the sight was both a reaffirmation of their own sanity and a warning of the abyss into which a fall from the state of reason would precipitate them. By this means society reaffirmed its values, but in so doing suppressed one of the interlocutors in the interplay between reason and unreason that had characterized the life of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

In his attempt to relate the patterns of internment to larger structures, Foucault refers also to economic data, for the fluctuations in the number incarcerated can be correlated with periodic economic crises. In Paris alone the edict of 1657 resulted within four years in the imprisonment of 6000 people—one percent of the inhabitants of the capital—who were thereby withdrawn from the labor force. Foucault does not suggest that society's treatment of the mad is determined by this or any other single cause, but rather that it results from a conjuncture of interests, much as in psychoanalytic theory an act may be over-determined. Here we could cite the very contradictions of internment as proof: the same treatment is considered at one moment as punishment, at another as social welfare or even therapy. Society's need to exclude is so compelling that the illogicalities are not apparent.

But to stop here would be to miss the main thrust of Foucault's argument. Confinement of the mad, as a public policy, is not simply a reflection of a culture; it is a preparation for a new manner of under-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

standing madness. Gradually in the course of the eighteenth century the bodily sick, the poor and the criminal are drawn off—either released or treated apart—and the mad are left as the common denominator of all those elements society had sought to isolate. The links between madness and sexuality and between madness and criminality that the nineteenth-century psychologists discovered as facts of nature were produced by the merging of different groups into a common exile. This form of internment prepared the way for nineteenth-century psychology. Foucault's study takes us to the opening of the new era, symbolized by Pinel's liberation of the chained madmen of Bicêtre. With this legendary scene of the Revolution the wheel has come full circle. The psychologists (Pinel, Turke) are prepared to confront the mad face to face, but this confrontation represents less a progress in terms of medical science than it does a shift in the relation between observer and observed. The psychologist, motivated by curiosity, can view the insensate as an object of study while remaining confident that these ravings are totally alien to his own experience. Thus, after long separation in the classical period, reason and unreason meet once again as the unimpassioned interview of doctor and patient.

This rapid summary does little justice to the richness of Foucault's study, which in an astonishing display of erudition combines the work of a psychologist, historian, social scientist and literary critic. Any brief summary of his argument is likely to err in implying that *Histoire de la Folie* is meant as an indictment of modern psychiatric methods. The contribution of the book lies in the author's insistence on treating the frontier drawn by a society between its reason and the unreason of madness as one of the constitutive elements of that society.

John Atherton

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANON. (CIRCA 1965)

To introduce a variation on variety—it might be called Puzzles and Epiphanies—and for the benefit of those who might have mislaid their July issue of Glamour, *we reprint the following, an excerpt from an interview with a well-known novelist*:

"Back at the University again, Mr. Stern and I wandered through the bookshop while waiting for Mr. Bellow—who had admitted he was fresh out of money as easily as a man might admit he was out of matches—to cash a check. In a well-known literary magazine, we discovered a review of *Herzog* that ridiculed every virtue earlier reviewers had found in the book, and attacked the author personally as well. Stern bought it after some debate (it also contained a favorable review —by another critic—of *his* latest book), but we agreed not to mention it. 'I know Saul has been warned about this review,' Stern explained, 'but I'm not going to bring it up unless he does. It's vicious. It's unforgivable.'

"But in the car, Bellow saw the magazine and, on the long drive to the next spot on our tour, seemed quite willing to discuss it. 'There were always those who didn't like *Herzog*, but since the big critics treated it so well—and especially since it became a best seller—there have been many attacks. I'm fair game now. It's the Golden Bough: I'm on top and must be cut down. I understand that, or try to.'

"Stern, who had read enough of the review to be very angry for his friend, said that this particular critic was unqualified and had an obvious personal bias. They went into the literary politicking in more detail, and added that other editors on the same magazine were greatly upset by the review. I asked about the critic's background: where had he come from? 'Harvard, of course,' said Bellow grimly."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

According to the latest count, there are 4,455 magazines

Scenes from a new play by Muriel Spark

Modernism and Modern Writing by Frank Kermode

Literature and the Invention of the Future by Leslie Fiedler

Irving Howe on Radical Criticism

Susan Sontag on Style

On Some Kinds of Editing by Norman Mailer

The American Voyeurs: Is there an I for an Eye?
by Richard Poirier

Civilization: The Lesser Evil by George Lichtheim

"Is there a New Sensibility?"
A Debate

Lionel Abel on Jean-Paul Sartre

The Intellectual History of New York
A Series

Harold Bloom on Frankenstein

The New Radicalism, Round III: Daniel Bell,
Bayard Rustin and others

Jack Ludwig on Automation

Robert Garis on Ballet: Balanchine and others

F. W. Dupee on Ezra Pound

Eric Bentley on the Berliner Ensemble

In the Creep Block, One Was Observed, a story
by John Hollander

A poem by John Betjeman

etc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

published in the United States. Why did you pick PR?

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

$pecial $aving: my check is enclosed for

☐ 5 issues at $4.50 ☐ 10 issues at $8.50

Bill me at the regular rates for

☐ 4 issues at $4.50 ☐ 8 issues at $8.50

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State ..... Zip .....

☐ New Subscription ☐ Extend my current subscription

Send all subscriptions to:
PARTISAN REVIEW, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J.

Special student offer: my check is enclosed for

☐ 4 issues at $3.50 ☐ 8 issues at $6.50

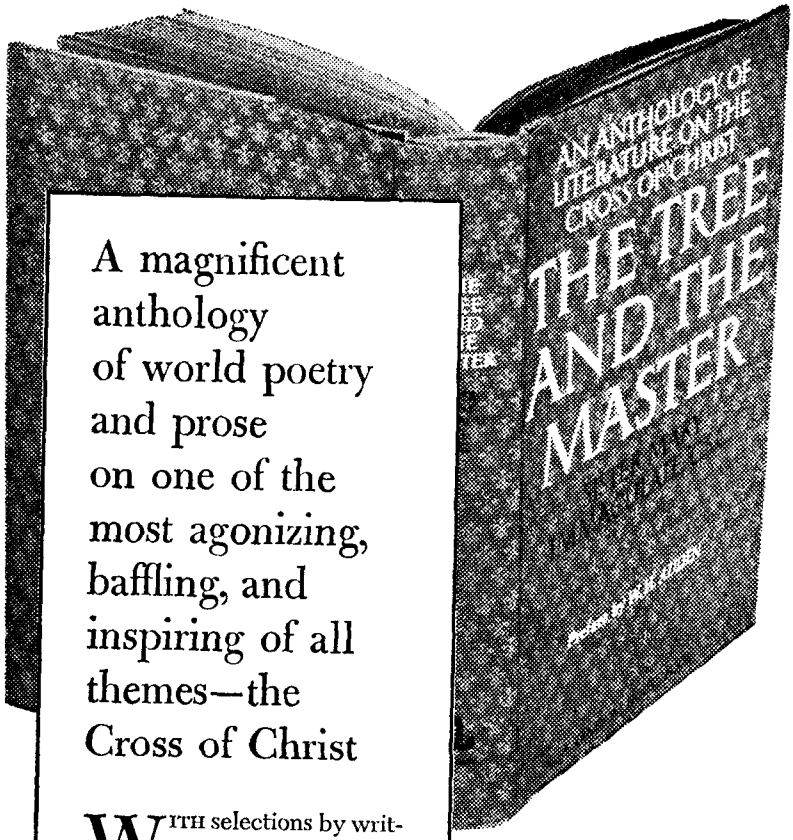
Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State ..... Zip .....

I am a student at .....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



A magnificent anthology of world poetry and prose on one of the most agonizing, baffling, and inspiring of all themes—the Cross of Christ

WITH selections by writers of many eras and cultures, ranging from Biblical times to twentieth-century New York—including King David, St. John of the Cross, Pär Lagerkvist, Flannery O'Connor, Robert Lowell, Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and many others. There are over a dozen entirely new translations from French, Italian, German, Spanish, Norse, and Middle English.

Edited by
SISTER MARY IMMACULATE, C.S.C.

Preface by
W. H. AUDEN

$6.00, now at your bookstore

RANDOM HOUSE

457 Madison Ave., N. Y., N. Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

WAITING FOR LEFTY

THE THEATRE OF REVOLT: STUDIES IN MODERN DRAMA FROM IBSEN TO GENET. By Robert Brustein. Atlantic-Little, Brown and Co. $7.50.

My only serious complaint about this book is its title and its first chapter. Mr. Brustein, I imagine, had already written his studies—all of them good, three or four of them excellent—of eight notable dramatists of the last hundred years, when he, or his publishers, suddenly thought that the essays ought to be bound together by a uniting concept. The concept of revolt is an intrinsically vague one, though not vacuous. Albert Camus gives it the sense of a gesture against the absurd conditions of existence; Nietzsche (who crops up frequently in this book) gave it more the sense of an attempt to break free from stock responses, received ideas, and to transcend the limitations of the self. I think that, in its literary uses, it is an individualistic rather than a social or political concept. (You can be splendidly in revolt without really working to change effectively anything going on around you, and without changing much more perhaps than attitudes or postures in the self.) Revolt, Mr. Brustein notes, can be negative or messianic, but it seems to me that we admire the dramatists he writes about for other more obvious qualities.

Only about three of them, anyway, are by Mr. Brustein's own standards genuine dramatists of revolt, early and late (but not middle) Ibsen, early but not late Strindberg, and Jean Genet. Shaw, as Mr. Brustein notes, is a reformer not a rebel, ineradicably a late Victorian gentleman-radical in his basic attitudes. Real revolt comes from a deep division in the self, and Shaw was too pleased with himself all through. Brecht is a revolutionary writer, no doubt, but he does not express deep revolt, except in his earlier, less satisfactory plays: the plays one likes best, like *The Good Woman of Sezchuan* (not dealt with by Mr. Brustein) or *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* are moral fables, like Tolstoy's *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* Their slyness and simplicity make them pleasing to children and wise old men. Chekhov, one of Mr.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brustein's other subjects, was a great classical humane writer, who combined human sensitiveness with an incisive but forgiving intelligence, in the tradition, let us say, of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*. I cannot see that *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard* are dramas of revolt (they are obviously dramas of criticism). Eugene O'Neill's two greatest plays, *The Iceman Cometh* and *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*, express, as Mr. Brustein himself demonstrates, not revolt, but the tortured and torturing yet never wholly unloving or ignoble human condition. Pirandello seems like Fellini or Antonioni, in technical revolt, but in his basic attitude to life, a mixture of cynical or pessimistic clear-sightedness and harsh compassion, very traditionally Italian. Jean Genet is, in one sense, a dramatist of revolt. But he is in that French tradition of agonizingly sharp dualism—let us have heaven or hell, and heaven through hell if possible, but no flaccid humanistic middle state—that runs through Baudelaire and Rimbaud and Léon Bloy. He seems to me very like Bloy in his excremental fury, his obsession with the perverse and abominable, his passion for sanctity. I dare say he might end up in the bosom of the Church.

The first chapter, as I say, is flashy. We get freshman-class history of ideas done in the historic present, like the first chapter of *A Tale of Two Cities*:

> Naturalism is replacing supernaturalism, the experiment is superseding the apparition. The statistic is being substituted for the insight, prose is supplanting poetry . . . ,

and so, antithetically, on. Bang, bang, bang! Enter Marx, John Stuart Mill, and Darwin, carrying horse-pistols and wearing black masks! But in fact Mr. Brustein's detailed analyses show that most of his dramatists worked not from popularized science or sociology but from symbolic ideas, like the contrast between Nietzschean hardness and Christian compassion. Shaw was more pervious to popularizations than the others (so, in his early days, was Eugene O'Neill). Chekhov was unique in his combination of an extraordinary social intelligence with a splendid, and unselfconscious, imperviousness to the grossness of ideologies.

But I should speak about the merits of this book. It contains the best short sympathetic appreciation I have read of Strindberg, as man and dramatist. Mr. Brustein leads us with wonderfully detailed insight through Strindberg's various phases. His development is a strange pilgrimage: from Oedipal fixation through false masculine protest, hysterical obsession with purity, hatred of women, assumption of Nietzschean hardness, to a growingly Christian (but never dogmatically or satisfiedly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christian) reverence for the Madonna-type, and a pious submission to fate or God. (This is a hard thing for a psychotic, a schizophrenic paranoiac, as Strindberg seems to have become in his years of isolation and non-production, to achieve. In *A Dream Play*, we see an extraordinary working out, deep and harsh and yet compassionate, of auto-psychoanalysis through free fantasy-projection.) The account makes me revere Strindberg: the poor miserable splendid old thing died of cancer in 1912, clutching a Bible and muttering: "Everything is atoned for!" It was a terrible life, and yet one agrees with Mr. Brustein that "it is the glory of his art that, despite his perpetual dissatisfaction with himself, few could wish him to be anything other than he was."

I must be briefer about the other studies. Covering Ibsen's whole development, Mr. Brustein defines three stages. Ibsen started as a poetic dramatist, an essentially Romantic one, of the extreme and erring but therefore noble and interesting, and outsize and symbolically representative, human case. Brand, Peer and Julian belong to this period. He went on, without ever losing his predilection for aristocratic solitude and inner struggle, to write the penetrating dramas of family and communal life ("houses for people") which still hold the stage. But from *The Master Builder* onwards he is lamenting that he has chosen ignoble themes and also, in *When We Dead Awaken*, that in a cold devotion to art he has missed the chance of vivid, pulsating life when it was offered to him. Mr. Brustein seems to agree with Ibsen's own judgment made in old age but, like most people, I still prefer the compromise with community, the middle range. On Chekhov, Mr. Brustein is interesting on the technique of submerged melodrama and interspersed farce. (The "dramatic" scenes happen between the acts, and the villains, with the exception of the beastly little lower-middle-class girl in *The Three Sisters*, are not villains, while the "nice people" ask for their own misfortunes.) He is less interesting on Shaw and Pirandello than on the others, because they are less interesting, perhaps. I wish he had dealt with *John Bull's Other Island*, Shaw's only "intimate" play, and one which comes out of bitter divisions in the self. He thinks Genet's ritual enactments of horrors *might* send us all out into the street, purged of aggression. I am not sure: "Aretine's pictures have made few chaste." Brecht needs a more tricky approach. But this is a book by a man immersed in the living theatre.

G. S. Fraser

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE LAST EDWARDIAN

ASQUITH: PORTRAIT OF A MAN AND AN ERA. By Roy Jenkins. Chilmark Press. $7.95.

Edwardian Britain has vanished from sight, and with it the men and women who performed a last graceful cotillion on the edge of the European volcano, until the eruption of World War I brought the nineteenth century to a close. Historians (but not the author of the present biography) have on occasion marked the analogy with the French Revolution: the "guns of August" shattered a society which was still in some sense aristocratic, though England—unlike the Continent—escaped revolution at the war's close. This was partly due to the rather hollow military victory of 1918, which offered the governing class a final respite; in part it reflected the enduring solidarity of a social structure unconsciously designed to satisfy the aspirations of all classes. The *ancien régime* had survived down to 1914. But it had survived not by violence, as on the Continent, but thanks to an ingenious compromise between the governing class and the middle and working classes. Even the war did not shatter it completely, though the oligarchy subordinated itself to the ex-radical Lloyd George in order to win. The democratization of British society had to await the even greater test of the period 1939-1945, when Churchill took Labour into partnership. By now the story is nearly ended. The oligarchy and its empire have all but vanished. Britain is on the point of becoming a democracy, ruled by Conservative and Labour politicians drawn from the same social stratum: the lower middle class. In a few years it will become difficult to tell the difference between a British Prime Minister and an Australian one.

The Edwardians belonged to an ampler and more self-confident age. They had their final fling and got plenty of enjoyment out of it. Britannia ruled the waves. One quarter of the globe was painted red. The pound sterling was unchallengeable. A word from the British Foreign Secretary was enough to alter the world balance of power. At home, Conservatives and Liberals quarreled over income tax: should it be one shilling in the pound or less? (It is now nearer ten shillings, almost fifty percent.) Should men and women over seventy, after a lifetime of toil, be granted a weekly pension of five shillings (say one dollar at the then current rate)? Lloyd George, aided by the Webbs, urged the measure (anticipated by Bismarck in the eighteen eighties) and finally in 1908

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pushed it through. Many Liberals, including of course the leading banking and financial authorities, thought it extravagant. It was in part financed out of inheritance taxes, which to the Tories (and the King) sounded like Red revolution.

This extraordinary society was presided over, for the last decade of its existence, by Gladstone's former Home Secretary, Herbert Henry Asquith: a dignified lawyer with the rumpled clothes and benevolent expression of an elderly college president. Asquith had risen in the world (his father was a minor textile manufacturer) and taken as his second wife the brilliant and extravagant Margot Tennant, a former member of the exclusive social coterie nicknamed "the Souls" (they included the Tory leader Arthur James Balfour and various aristocrats with mildly intellectual aspirations). The marriage could have served as a symbol, though in point of fact Margot Asquith became a fervent Liberal—on occasion rather more fervent than her phlegmatic husband. The Liberal Party had lost most of the old Whig families in 1886, when Gladstone split Liberalism over Irish Home Rule (a measure which affected the large landowners), but it still attracted recruits from the aristocracy and was strongly represented in the House of Lords. By way of Gladstone's immediate successor, Lord Rosebery, it also served as a link between the solid middle-class lawyers and bankers—Asquith, Haldane, McKenna and the rest—and the Imperial bureaucracy which ran India and Africa. Thus was Liberal Imperialism born. In 1900 Asquith sided with the Tory Government against the Boer Republics. So did Edward Grey, in later years his Foreign Secretary and the man principally responsible for Britain's entry into the war against Germany in 1914. Lloyd George defended the Boers, at some cost to his popularity, and thus established a reputation as a Radical. This came in useful in 1914 when he sided with Asquith, Grey, Churchill and the others in the Liberal Cabinet who decided to treat the German march through Belgium as a *casus belli.*

Most of these facts can be pieced together from Mr. Roy Jenkins' biography of the protagonist, though the reader uninstructed in the complexities of British parliamentary government may need some fortitude along the way. Mr. Jenkins, who in October, 1964, joined the Labour Government in the key post of Aviation Minister, is in some ways the ideal biographer of Asquith. Not only does he know a great deal—almost too much—about his subject: he is temperamentally attuned to Edwardian Liberalism, to a degree which renders a bit puzzling his own political career as a Socialist (of the Gaitskellian stripe, it is true). There is a further puzzle: Mr. Jenkins is reputedly a fervent "European,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but no one would gather this from the tone of his book, which is insular in the last degree. Foreigners make hardly any appearance. Even Woodrow Wilson—Asquith's contemporary and counterpart—is only noticed in connection with the war. This is a book about British politics, written by an insider who clearly finds the game fascinating. It is full of Cabinet circulars and meetings of the Imperial Defense Committee, not to mention private letters and memoranda bearing upon conflicts over policy. The professionals are bound to find it enthralling. Readers not wholly engrossed in the game of politics may think Mr. Jenkins a trifle too fond of his charmed world. They may also suspect him of philistinism. In this they would be wrong. He is in fact very civilized. The reason he has nothing to say about the literary side of the Edwardian age, and almost nothing about philosophy, history, or even economics (Keynes is mentioned just once, as a junior official in the Treasury), is that he has deliberately set out to write a purely political biography. Is this worth doing? I am not sure. In any case he has done it very well, though he lacks the grand manner Sir Philip Magnus deployed with such remarkable effect in his biography of Gladstone. But then perhaps the grand style would not have been quite appropriate for Asquith.

Such as it is, Mr. Jenkins' work is solidly constructed and worth reading. It tells one a great deal (though not enough) about the reasons why British Liberalism went to pieces before and during World War I. (The rot had set in earlier—it really went back to Gladstone's failure in the eighteen nineties to settle the Irish problem, and to Liberal helplessness in the face of both socialism and imperialism.) It also relates a few new anecdotes. Asquith, one learns, in 1912 (at the age of sixty) struck up a sentimental relationship with the future wife of one of his Cabinet Ministers, then an attractive young woman of twenty-five. His letters to Venetia Stanley were numerous and indiscreet. He had a habit of penning them during Cabinet meetings. He also made a habit of telling her Cabinet secrets, including military ones which the Germans in the period 1914-1915 would have given much to possess. It is remarkable that no hint of the affair leaked out—doubly remarkable since Asquith was quite frequently seen with her in public. When in May, 1915, she suddenly married his junior colleague Edwin Montagu (for which purpose she had to convert to Judaism), Asquith was heartbroken and temporarily lost control of the political situation. The news reached him during a grave crisis in the management of affairs (the war was going badly, and the Tories were after Churchill's blood for his conduct of the Dardanelles campaign), and it clearly had something to do with the curious lassitude which seems to have overtaken him at this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dangerous moment. It was a foretaste of the greater crisis at the end of 1916, which ended his long reign and installed Lloyd George as his successor at the head of a Coalition Government in fact dominated by the Conservatives. The Liberal hegemony was over. Not many years later, free trade was abandoned and sterling devalued for the first time. It was the beginning of the end.

In retrospect the Edwardian age, over which Asquith presided with some firmness and considerable dignity, appears as the close of the century of British predominance established in 1815. The French challenge had been beaten off. Until the next contestant appeared, England was safe, and all concerned could afford to "muddle through." By the opening decade of the new century it was becoming clear that the German challenge was going to be formidable. The Tories reacted in predictable fashion: find allies and prepare for war (preventive if necessary). Most Liberals hoped that the whole thing would blow over. Why should Britain and Germany fight? They were each other's best customers! This was to underrate the ambitions of the Germans, and to overestimate Britain's dwindling prestige as an unbeatable world power. Churchill, then officially a Liberal, was not taken in. In 1908 he sent Asquith a memorandum advocating drastic internal reforms. Britain, he urged, should follow the example of Germany. "She is organized not only for war but for peace. We are organized for nothing except party politics. . . . I say thrust a big slice of Bismarckianism over the whole underside of our industrial system, and await the consequences, whatever they may be, with a good conscience." That was also the advice of the Webbs, who were convinced that war with Germany was coming and that it would necessitate economic planning and authoritarianism in government. In the last Liberal Cabinet before 1914, this attitude was represented by Haldane, Churchill and Lloyd George—the latter still regarded as a Radical. Asquith preferred, in his favorite phrase, to wait and see. What he lived to see was the end of his world.

George Lichtheim

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAMES DICKEY'S POEMS

HELMETS. By James Dickey. Wesleyan University Press. $1.85.

James Dickey's *Helmets* is set apart from the run of everyday competent verse by its content: the poems arise from experience that requires poetry to comprehend it. The absence of this sort of experience is what makes so much otherwise unexceptionable modern poetry dull—the poets seem to have gone out of their way, conscientiously, to make poems out of their own fine sensibilities. With Dickey, the facts of his poems, or the best ones, demand a poem, and even if these facts, this experience, is sometimes taken by inept strategy, the results are nevertheless real poems and the experience comes on unarguable and true.

Dickey sees things his own way, almost wilfully, and his strategy is to bear down until the reader receives the same intensity of vision. It is unusual for a poet to hold so pigheadedly to a solipsistic insight without becoming private or perverse. The method is best seen in four or five magnificent poems in this book that are too long to quote: "Cherrylog Road," about an adolescent love affair conducted in the violent ruin of an automobile graveyard, "A Folk Singer of the Thirties," which catches a character and an era in a vast, fierce metaphor, and the first and last poems in the book, among them. But it can be seen in small in the opening lines of "The Ice Skin":

All things that go deep enough
Into rain and cold
Take on, before they break down,
A shining in every part.
The necks of slender trees
Reel under it, too much crowned,
Like princes dressing as kings,

And the redwoods let sink their branches
Like arms that try to hold buckets
Filling slowly with diamonds

Until a cannon goes off
Somewhere inside the still trunk
And a limb breaks, just before midnight,
Plunging houses into the darkness
And hands into cupboards, all seeking
Candles, and finding each other.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I guess it is some corollary of James Dickey's concern for the facts of experience that makes his verse so plain. The unrhymed lines tend to have three beats, and are sometimes cut up into regular but totally arbitrary stanzas—"The Ice Skin," for instance, alternates divisions of seven lines and three—none of them describing organic divisions of the poem. This plainness puts as much pressure on the verbal and rhythmic accuracy of the language as in free verse. Dickey seems to welcome this attention to his insistent, unadorned observations of experience which, through attention, becomes miraculous.

The poems and parts of poems that don't work are those where he is making heroic metaphors out of experience that doesn't come off on that scale. A poem about "Kudzu," for example, strikes me as badly overwrought, while other fine poems like "Springer Mountain" and "The Scarred Girl" are extended beyond the range of their own intensity.

But Dickey is in the clear as a poet. He knows a poem when one happens to him and, like a small number of his talented contemporaries—James Merrill and W. D. Snodgrass, for instance—he puts his name on it.

William Meredith

THE THEORY OF TALK

ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF SYNTAX. By Noam Chomsky. M.I.T. Press. $7.50.
CURRENT ISSUES IN LINGUISTIC THEORY. By Noam Chomsky. Mouton & Co., The Hague. $2.75.
AN INTEGRATED THEORY OF LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTIONS. By Jerrold J. Katz and Paul Postal. M.I.T. Press. $6.00.

The study of language comprises an array of diverse and partly incompatible activities, clustered around a nearly vacant center: that is, we have lacked a compelling theory to explain the fact—and the way—that human beings speak. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to be sure, philosophers and philologists explored the notion of a universal grammar, rooted in universal categories of mind. But empiricism sent innate ideas into eclipse; and as linguistic studies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

broadened to include non-Indo-European languages, with their apparently outlandish structures, the hypothesis of a universal grammar lost respectability. In our century operationalism, positivism and behaviorism helped confirm the decline of ample linguistic theorizing.

Since about 1930, in any event, linguistics has pursued rigor and objectivity within a radically diminished framework, which may be schematized (and of course oversimplified) as a pentad of abstemious doctrines. 1. The data are primary; they must not be contaminated by any seepage of abstract or non-observable entities. Hence linguists work from a limited, though preferably huge, "corpus" of utterances. 2. The aim of a linguist is to *describe* the corpus as economically as possible. He will begin with the smallest elements (phonemes) and move to larger ones (morpheme, phrase, sentence), anchoring each category to the hard, physical data through a hierarchy of classes. There must be no recourse from description to *explanation,* the begetter of fantasy. 3. The linguist should attain his description by mechanical, hence repeatable, procedures. 4. Any appeal to meaning is taboo, since meanings are unreliable data. *A fortiori,* the linguist will eschew the heresy of mentalism, and observe the rule of parsimony in assigning structure and content to the mind: the hypothesis of the *tabula rasa* will do, in practice. 5. No inference is justified from the structure of language A to that of language B. Languages are indefinitely various; it is futile to posit linguistic universals, at least until the remotest dialect of central New Guinea has been run down and described.

Possibly no one linguist has ever subscribed to all the particulars of this summary. Nonetheless, I think it a fair indication of the prevailing weather in American linguistics during the forties and fifties. And from this tough-minded credo some unquestionable benefits derived: high standards of precision, for instance, and regularized descriptions of many hitherto unrecorded languages. But at a cost. The doctrine of less is more meant preferring answerable questions to suggestive ones. Moreover, even the most austere, data-bound theory takes on some risk of failure, and it seems reasonably certain now that the theory implicit in descriptive linguistics—namely, that natural languages can be fully described by techniques of segmentation and classification—fails in principle. So much was demonstrated by Noam Chomsky in *Syntactic Structures,* published in 1957.[1] Chomsky's restructuring of linguistics—known as "generative grammar"—remains today the most virulently debated issue in the field. Meanwhile, generative grammar has itself been evolving rapidly; the three books at hand represent elaborations of and

1 *Syntactic Structures.* By Noam Chomsky. Humanities. $7.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

advances from *Syntactic Structures*. All three are in part highly technical, but the hypothesis they articulate has a general importance that can scarely be exaggerated.

Although generative grammar, like any rich theory, suffers from resumé treatment, a brief sketch can give some idea of the stakes. Conceive a grammar, then, as a theory of a particular language, analogous to the "theory" that a speaker carries in his head. For a start it must specify ("generate") the sentences of that language, and do so with a finite number of rules, since the speaker's brain is finite. Yet every speaker can speak, recognize, and understand infinitely many sentences; the grammar too must possess this creative capacity. Here the mode of syntactic analysis proposed by descriptive linguists falls short, because, as Chomsky showed, one cannot specify all the sentences of a language through a manageable inventory of elements. One can, of course, account for all the sentences in a *corpus*, but doing so constitutes a fairly unexciting achievement, since the challenge in writing grammars is precisely to anticipate *new* sentences.

Furthermore, a grammar must provide each sentence with a structural analysis that corresponds to the way in which speakers intuitively analyze it. For instance, the grammar will have to indicate that the grammatical subject differs from the logical subject in "The books were written by a Swede," that the two parallel sentences

John is easy to please
John is eager to please

have very different underlying structures, that "I had three books stolen" is structurally ambiguous, and so on. It is necessary to abandon the requirement that structural categories be tied concretely to the data, and to posit a set of abstract rules (called "transformations") that relate surface structures to deep structures. The deep structures alone express significant relationships, and it is upon them that the semantic rules operate to yield meanings. But the phonological rules, which indicate the sound of each sentence, work on surface structures. The picture, then, is of a three-part grammar that mediates, through syntax, between the sound and the sense of infinitely many sentences, in a way that explains how finite human beings do the same astonishing thing.

It is crucial to notice that generative grammar takes as part of its data the "linguistic intuition" of the speaker—what he *knows* (though he cannot describe his knowledge explicitly) about traffic rules within any sentence. Correspondingly, Chomsky insists that the focus of linguistic investigation is not the speaker's performance, which will incorporate all the irregularities that attend on haste and human fallibility, but his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

underlying *competence*. Linguistics, by implication, has erred in savoring its all too successful revolt against mentalism: to describe a language adequately is to characterize a system of mental capacities.

Beyond doing that, a theory of language must try to achieve what Chomsky calls "explanatory adequacy"; that is, "it aims to provide a principled basis, independent of any particular language," for choosing the appropriate grammar of every particular language. What might such a basis be? Essentially an account of two things: first, the general form of languages, and second, the linguistic capacity shared by all human beings. But almost certainly the former is equivalent to the latter. To see this, consider the situation of a child learning to talk. He hears a random scattering of sentences, of which many but not all are well-formed; adults may correct his speech occasionally. Building on this irregular experience, he constructs an abstract, infinitely creative hypothesis about the form of language. As Katz and Postal point out, there is no possibility of his doing so by induction, or by "generalization," in the psychologist's terms; for he has no "stimuli" to generalize from except surface structures which are mainly severe distortions of the deep structures that he must—and does—discover. Rather, the child apparently has an a priori notion of what he is to learn. And since he will learn with equal ease whatever language he is exposed to, his innate assumptions must pertain equally to all human languages. Thus Chomsky proposes that "the child approaches the data with the presumption that they are drawn from a language of a certain antecedently well-defined type. . . . Language learning would be impossible unless this were the case."

In linguistic practice, adopting this hypothesis means attributing to the general form of languages as much of the structure of each particular language as is feasible. That may be quite a bit. That there are universals in phonology, important work by Roman Jakobson, Morris Halle, and Chomsky strongly implies. Certainly transformational rules enter into the syntax of every language. Katz and Postal think that the basic word classes, word orders, and grammatical relations are universals of deep structure, though of course surface structures vary widely. And the conclusion seems inescapable that all languages share a system of meanings—or, to put it philosophically, that there is an "a priori structure to the system of 'attainable concepts' " (Chomsky).

There can be no final verdict on such ambitious claims until we have far more detailed grammars than those currently available, and for many more languages. But at least within the framework of generative grammar it has become natural once more to ask the old interesting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

questions, and possible for the first time to frame them explicitly and thereby open a door on explicit, if remote, answers. The prospect is liberating. A revival of interest in abstract underlying forms and in universal grammar announces a linguistic science commensurate with the magnitude of its subject. It subordinates objectivity to insight; it removes the exaggerated premium set on operational tactics and the accumulation of evidence (evidence is embarrassingly plentiful now, in contrast to explanations). Linguists are turning again to the study of mind.

This orientation gives hope that sometime, by specifying universals of linguistic structure, linguists may reach sound inferences about the structure of our mental capacities. Already, generative grammar has collaborated with work in psychology to make simplistic models of learning, perceiving, thinking, and behaving quite untenable. Certainly the notion that we learn by reinforcement of unguided responses and perceive by classification fails in the case of speech, which would be impossible for an "empty organism." In short, we seem to have overestimated for a time the role of experience, while neglecting that of mind. What one learns and knows may, as Chomsky says, reflect "not so much the course of one's experience, but rather the general character of one's capacity to acquire knowledge, in the traditional sense, one's innate ideas and innate principles."

Richard Ohmann

THE IMAGINATION GOES TO COLLEGE

THE EDUCATED IMAGINATION. By Northrop Frye. Indiana University Press. $4.50.

The Educated Imagination will be of little importance to those familiar with Mr. Frye's critical position. Originally a series of six radio talks, it might serve as an introduction for those who have managed somehow to isolate themselves from the incessant din of academic quarrels and who prefer the prose of extension-course lecturing to the anfractuosities of scholastic argument. For the rest of us, *The Educated Imagination* may start an intellectual hare or two, but the chase will lead across terrain that has already been mapped in greater detail by Mr. Frye's previous books. Here is the same synoptic vision of literature as an all-encompassing system, a field of study that may be taught as surely as an adequate training in physics may turn out competent scientists, whatever the measure of each student's individual genius and natural endow-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments; here, too, the sustained analogy between applied mathematics and poetry, physics and criticism, the neutral world described by science and the universe conceived by the imagination, "entirely possessed and occupied by human life." Given the immense prestige of the scientific enterprise in our culture, it should barely raise eyebrows that disciplines wishing to claim intellectual rigor and authenticity would model themselves upon a supposed paradigm of scientific effort; the only surprise is that a system like Mr. Frye's should have been so long in coming. Mr. John Holloway has recently shown how the comparison with science gave Eliot and the New Critics a handy stick for intimidating the reader. Still, the same critics often encouraged explanations of poetic meaning in terms of a primitive or archaic mentality; they seemed to indicate that a kind of atavism was absolutely required for the prosecution of literary thought. It was left for Mr. Frye to reconcile these discordant elements.

The point about modern physics, for Mr. Frye, is that it increasingly presents a curriculum, a body of work that can be *taught*: the ability for independent and original thinking remains as elusive as ever, but its essential prerequisite, the ability to survey the field of contemporary work and take it in, can be communicated. Everyone knows that science makes the world calculable, that its ultimate project is to envisage a universe of mathematical occasions; and Mr. Frye is particularly anxious to take literature as a kind of advanced physics ("literature, the laboratory where myths themselves are studied and experimented with"), which envisions a universe of metaphorical events. According to Mr. Frye, the imagination has its own mathematics, its own system of relationships that refer of themselves to nothing in particular. Just as every given number system is presented by the mathematician as a well-ordered whole and as a sequential unfolding of individual units, so Mr. Frye offers the primary structural relationships informing literary thought in two guises, as an epiphanic significance ("archetypal meaning"), a collapsing of imagery into a moment of instantaneous comprehension, and as a rhythm of narration ("myth"), an extension of epiphany over a course of time. One may say that science was born when mankind came to realize, however crudely, that the ways by which mathematical symbolisms can be referred to events range far beyond the simple conceptual acts that see things as two or three, five or ten, or one and singular; that these ways are infinitely diverse, and that the business of understanding is not to choose any set of them but to coordinate the lot. Just so, Mr. Frye sees myth and archetype naively identified with specific feelings of desire and aversion to begin with; rooted therefore in primitive forms of ritual and oracle, until liberated by what he terms an "inductive leap" that produced his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

correlative of physics, literature. The change comes when men cease to regard number as the inherent property of certain things (or stop thinking of love and anxiety as the invariable concomitants of certain situations) and begin to see it as an infinitely diverse set of purely formal relations, whose manifold reference to experience may be universally coordinated.

> No human society is too primitive to have some kind of literature. The only thing is that primitive literature hasn't yet become distinguished from other aspects of life: it's still embedded in religion, magic, and social ceremonies. But we can see literary expression taking shape in these things, and forming an imaginative framework, so to speak, that contains the literature descending from it.

Of course, teaching literature is somewhat complicated by the fact that mankind has unaccountably neglected to denominate the basic structural elements of literature, while the units and operations of mathematics have long possessed appropriate names; but Mr. Frye labors prodigiously to supply the deficiency, ransacking a formidable erudition for terms. This isn't criticism as many have come to understand it, because what Mr. Frye is doing doesn't involve the assertion of preferences; but if criticism is to develop a rigorous pedagogy, personal testimony will have to go, and Mr. Frye bravely salutes the prospect of its departure.

Mr. Frye's argument does not always move in this breathless atmosphere, but something like a close analogy to mathematics lies behind his assault upon various theories—psychoanalytical, anthropological, and literary—which understand works of art as the expression of an archaic self thwarted by the historical forms of civilization. Like the teacher of physics, the critic must not regard the utterances with which he deals as relevant to a given personality, thwarted or consummated, as the case may be. The relation of literature to primal fantasy, according to Mr. Frye, is logical, not chronological; and the presence of the king's son, the mimic death, the executioner, the substituted victim, no more identifies Gilbert's *The Mikado* as "disguised" fertility rite than the use of cardinal numbers identifies advanced physics as a "disguised" form of counting. The critic who discovers anything more concrete at the heart of the poetic wood than a central monomyth, inconceivably diverse, has reverted to a pre-literary Pythagoreanism.

One can see how Mr. Frye's argument admirably suits the sentimental, post-Symbolist revival of myth in our literary culture. Every man has his own imaginings, and every period in history its public fantasies, a continuous, unremitting dreaming in concert, which gives meaning to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social life. For various reasons (I should say they *are* historical), many of our important poets and writers can no longer take immediate and confident possession of their imaginative paradigms. A suspicion of popular fantasy has intervened that is not wholly unsalutory; and this, combined with the felt need for imaginative discipline, has produced an unaccustomed, universal premeditation of mythic references. One effect of Mr. Frye's system is to present this self-consciousness as an unambiguous gain in power; like science, literature imposes (has always imposed?) a purely formal system of relationships upon experience; it is therefore autonomous, free of particular assertions and preferences. To the objection that archetypal analysis works as well upon cheap entertainments as upon literature important to the tradition, Mr. Frye can answer that for the teaching of physics the simplest high school experiment will do to illuminate basic principles, and affords its own pleasure. The real discrimination the critic has to make is one of complexity; popular fiction, nursery rhymes and folk tales "displace" mythic patterns onto experience peremptorily, at the behest of non-literary impulses, whereas the mature work of art points more clearly inwards, at the total coordination of dream and reverie—it extends the possibilities of intramural reference to an ultimate point. When we do science, we learn to read the work of other scientists as expressions of a single effort at mathematical interpretation; when we do literature, we must learn to read the whole of it as one Symbolist poem—vast, anonymous, endlessly patient of interpretation.

What difference does the study of literature make in our social or political or religious attitudes? That, says Mr. Frye, is the important question to ask, and the trouble with his system is that it leaves no room for an answer. Science proposes the total coordination of measurement, and literature the total integration of fantasy-life; it is "a wish-fulfillment dream and an anxiety dream, that are focused together." (There is more of I. A. Richards' neural balances here than the difference in rhetoric might lead one to suspect.) But science makes a difference to life, it has a technical issue, because it is practical at the core. The application of mathematical symbolisms to experience, in any but the most primitive fashion, increasingly demands a physical basis in action; one can't simply contemplate the world to discover the mathematical form of events. For something like the mathematization of all that is calculable to be an ongoing enterprise, not an abstract possibility, science requires the conditions for ever-increasing complexity of experiment—the minute coordination of action that technological society affords. Only in a world of rigorously manipulated events can the ways in which mathematical symbolisms take on concrete meaning be rigorously determined; only in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Announcing
the
Current

DELTA PRIZE NOVEL AWARD

for a work of
outstanding fiction
to be published in
hardcover and paperback

Judges

JEAN STAFFORD
LOUIS AUCHINCLOSS
GORE VIDAL

Deadline January 31, 1966. The winning entry will be announced on or before June 1 and published the following fall.

No contest forms required. Write to Delta Prize Novel, Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 750 Third Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10017 for rules and details.

1965-1966 PRIZE
$10,000

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such a world is physics teachable. If literature were the kind of thing that Mr. Frye supposes, it would have a social issue by rigorously manipulating all expressions of desire and anxiety into a coordinated whole—a fair description, I suppose, of certain varieties of advertising and propaganda; at all events not an attractive program for culture. To avoid this implication, Mr. Frye tells us that literature is free, bloodless, not physics after all, but pure mathematics, an exercise of the spirit uncontaminated by matter, which demonstrates the hypothetical freedom of repudiation and desire from historical complication. This, I think, makes history a gratuitous error on the part of mankind; certainly it makes literature an irrelevance. Mr. Frye's system, if I may be allowed the figure, offers a version, displaced onto criticism, of the myth of the earthly Paradise, in which fantasy is once more pure and bodiless, and the curse of historical understanding has been lifted.

Alvin C. Kibel

THE DAY THAT WAS

ONE DAY. By Wright Morris. Atheneum. $5.95.

Few writers in America at present can afford to disregard the news. Responding to the assault of recent events, the writer has determined to be relevant. This impulse has become perceptible across a widening range of literary production, a range extending from the Robert Lowell plays to Norman Mailer's latest publication. It has, of course, had unhappy as well as salutary consequences.

This is the central problem confronting the reader of Wright Morris' new novel. The *One Day* in question is the day of John F. Kennedy's assassination, and the author has attempted to link that event with the lives of his characters. One is inclined to feel that this intention is, in itself, suspect. In its supposition that such links can be constructed, it veers perilously close to Leslie Fiedler's overwrought notion of history as "the subtlest allegorist of all." Even if the intention itself does not always make for facile parallels, it assumes an uneasy fusion of two orders of reality, each of which has its own form of analysis, yields its own kind of meaning, and demands its own criteria for relevance and credibility. In the novelistic terms of *One Day,* the assassination is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gratuitous, irrelevant, and unbelievable; and one is not convinced, conversely, that the incidents in the lives of the characters could not have taken place on any other day.

Given his intention, Mr. Morris must concern himself with the implications of an actual event. In real life, of course, those implications are obscure and almost unlimited; in fiction, they must be specified in terms of the author's concerns and characters. When, for example, Proust uses the Dreyfus case, it is as a device for analyzing character; since it is used to help explain the characters, it serves a primarily artistic end. In *One Day*, however, the characters are meant to explain the event; this is essentially a sociological function. As a consequence, the meanings sought lie outside the fiction, and the event has not been transformed into a novelistic event. Hence, it seems like an intrusion; but the form that the author has chosen, which hardly seems commensurate with the complexities of his intention, will not admit of such intrusions.

Indeed, in form and style *One Day* is almost completely conventional. Constructed, in large part, as a series of character sketches, it makes use of a form which has been more or less worn out since Sherwood Anderson. The pace, an easy even ramble, suits the prose, which is efficient if often pedestrian—and often, incidentally, laced with unaccountable Yiddish constructions ("A used washing machine she had bought, in dryers she did not believe"). The tone is a sophisticated twang approaching, at its best, that of Pudd'nhead Wilson and, at its worst, that of the Stage Manager in *Our Town*. On the whole, though, it conveys a sense of rural shrewdness and moral placidity, a tongue-in-cheekiness which allows for such dry insinuating observations as that of "pigeon-breasted Miriam who read Genet in the original and spoke brightly of how he jerked off as if she meant he left Paris quickly."

The characters, who are all "characters," are the inhabitants of Escondido, a small suburban California town. The plot, a welter of vignettes and flashbacks, is inordinately intricate; but the main line, and the least interesting, is centered on Alec Cartwright. During a sojourn in Paris she has been made pregnant by Lyle P. (for Protest) Jackson, a young Omaha Negro who, unaware of what has happened, returns to America to demonstrate down south. Alec, on her way home after a spell of Freedom Riding, abandons a gourmet foods basket containing her baby in the night depository of the local Pound. This causes quite a stir. But it is not long before the mother's identity is guessed, and it is subsequently learned that Alec meant the act to be a protest. The significance of this protest remains unclear, but Alec is supposed to be a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mixed-up kid ("She did not want to take care of *anything*, including herself"). When the news from Dallas breaks, however, she realizes how trivial her own attempt to shock the world has been, and concludes that "We all killed him. If *anybody* did it, we did it." This revelation is, if possible, even more shallow than her protest.

Still, the novel improves every time it escapes its intention. Mr. Morris is much more reliable in close-range observations, and his greatest strength is his ability to pin down a character in a nest of immediate associations, e.g., Evelina: "She would be sitting on her Om-peer bidet, straddle-legged, fanning her thighs with somebody's souvenir menu." And much novelistic energy is spent in flashbacks of the lives of characters; the best of these deal with Luigi, Wendell Horlick, and Cowie. In an atmosphere of matrons who "had voices that were pitched to speak to their pets," they realize a conception of the individual as the captive of society: who is, nevertheless, at times "possessed from within by *another* person," someone "seen inside, peering out." These sections, especially those relating to Cowie, are imaginatively so far superior to anything else in the book that they seem out of place.

Cowie, potentially the most substantial character, is conceived of as "the maverick who never leaves the herd." "The loner who does not want to be alone"—but one is heartily offended by the author's overbearing over-explicit insistence on tying up these traits with those of Lee H. Oswald. Far from increasing Cowie's significance, this virtually nullifies it, and reduces him to the level of superficial message bearer. Ultimately, the demands of the author's misguided intention are ruinous to his fiction; but one has the feeling that his chances for success might have been greater had he only let his characters speak for themselves.

Stephen Donadio

CRITIC'S CRITIC

MUSIC OBSERVED. By B. H. Haggin. Oxford University Press. $6.50.

Though B. H. Haggin has written several books, most of his music criticism has appeared in the magazines and newspapers he has served as a regular contributor at various times during the last thirty years or so. In 1949 some of his columns for the *Nation*—the publica-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion he is probably most often associated with in readers' minds—were reprinted in *Music in the Nation; Music Observed,* which is clearly intended to give an overall view of his career, contains what he considers his best work since then, together with a few *Nation* columns also in the earlier collection and a number of pieces done in the thirties and forties for other journals.

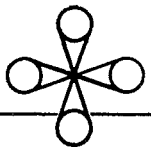
Limitations of space prevent me from discussing Haggin's particular judgments and so I must simply assert, without attempting to show, that he has succeeded remarkably well in living up to his own stipulation that a music critic must accurately describe the object before him and must "give his reader not only an honest judgment but the basis of this judgment, the ideas about music and performance which will add up in the reader's mind to musical understanding, to a basis for his own judgment." Though he has often been accused of being narrowly dogmatic and over-intellectual, actually his range of appreciation is as wide as his taste is discriminating, and he is perhaps most illuminating on music usually not considered worth uncondescending attention: early and middle Verdi, the work of composers like Rossini and Tchaikovsky, beautifully wrought performances of "concert favorites," Broadway show music, and jazz. One might even sum up his achievement as a practical critic by saying—with a good deal of exaggeration but at least as much truth—that he has shown that if you aren't excited by Toscanini's performance of *Dance of the Hours* or by Beiderbecke's solo entrance on *I'm Coming Virginia,* then there's probably a good deal you're missing in Schnabel's performances of Beethoven's last sonatas.

To see why this is an important thing to have done we must turn to what I am tempted—despite Haggin's fierce suspicion of all theorizing—to call the theoretical side of his work: "the ideas about music and performance" that underlie his particular judgments, and (just as important) his view of criticism and his sense of his audience.

All his writing has taken off from the assumption implied by the title of his book *Music for the Man Who Enjoys "Hamlet,"* that because formal education and ordinary daily life better prepare us to deal with literature and even with the visual arts than with music, there is a large and sophisticated audience far more capable of enjoying *Hamlet* than its musical analogues—Beethoven's last sonatas, say, and Schnabel's performances of them. The problem is not merely one of inexperience, however, for the intellectual sophistication such people already possess can be at least as great an obstacle to attaining musical sophistication. The more adept you are at handling ideas, the more liable you will be—when you approach music—to let ideas slip between you and what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bollingen Series



THE COLLECTED WORKS OF
PAUL VALÉRY
Edited by JACKSON MATHEWS

Planned in fifteen volumes, the first collected edition in English is presented in new translations from the French, prepared especially for the edition by various poets and scholars. Each volume is introduced by a contemporary literary figure and includes editorial notes which clarify the allusions and other references which might escape the American or English reader. The poetic works are accompanied by the French text.

AVAILABLE NOW:

Volume 3. PLAYS.
Translated by David Paul and Robert Fitzgerald. With an Introduction by Francis Fergusson and a Memoir by Igor Stravinsky. Includes all of Valéry's writings for the theater, with two related prose pieces. $4.50

Volume 4. DIALOGUES.
Translated by William McCausland Stewart. With two prefaces by Wallace Stevens. All the formal dialogues, including *Eupalinos* and six others. $3.00

Volume 7. THE ART OF POETRY.
Translated by Denise Folliot. With an Introduction by T. S. Eliot. Twenty-eight essays and addresses on poets, poetics, and poetry. $4.50

Volume 10. HISTORY AND POLITICS.
Translated by Denise Folliot and Jackson Mathews. With an Introduction by Salvador de Madariaga. Writings on the League of Nations, Women in Politics, Europe, the East, World War II. $5.00

Volume 12. DEGAS, MANET, MORISOT.
Translated by David Paul with an Introduction by Douglas Cooper. Contains Valéry's book on Degas, a long essay on Corot, others on Berthe Morisot, Manet, Daumier, and Renoir, and other writings on the fine arts. $3.50

Volume 13. AESTHETICS
Translated by Ralph Manheim. With an Introduction by Herbert Read. Reflections on the arts, including the delightful essay "Man and the Sea Shell". $4.00

Just published:
Volume 5. IDÉE FIXE.
Translated by David Paul with an Introduction by Philip Wheelwright and a preface by Jackson Mathews. An offhand, personal, amusing dialogue of ideas on the nature of man and his haphazard relations with the world. $3.00

Please order from your bookstore. Published by Bollingen Foundation. Distributed by Pantheon Books, 22 East 51st St., New York 10022. For detailed catalogue, write to Bollingen Series, 140 East 62nd St., New York 10021

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you hear, and to wind up like the ladies at the concert in *Howard's End,* mistaking fantasies and schemas for genuine perceptions. Since ideas are more likely to get in the way with late Beethoven—ideas about the philosophical content of German music, for example, or about certain styles and traditions of performance—than with Ponchielli and Beiderbecke, learning to listen to them can help in learning to listen to him.

And since music critics are the main source of such distracting ideas, it can also help a person who is intellectually but not musically sophisticated to see their assumptions clearly spelled out and their arguments evaluated. Therefore Haggin has devoted a good deal of his own writing to that of other critics, a practice that has struck some readers as not only ill-mannered but irrelevant since a music critic should confine himself to music. To this he has replied that criticism is "a part of the [musical] scene and a part that in considerable degree determines the rest," and that a music critic has the obligations as well as the privileges of an expert: "Is the rule for music critics to be different from the rule for historians, anthropologists and philosophers, who are considered to be the right ones to evaluate each other's writings?" And he has then gone on to deal devastatingly and very entertainingly with the system-grinding musicologists, modern music propagandists and plain journalistic hacks who are his colleagues.

Haggin's point, however, is not that we should have no ideas while listening to music, but merely that we should get rid of externally supplied ideas in order to experience directly those communicated by the music. Therefore he has not followed Forster's Tibby in imploring us "to look out for the transitional passage on the drum," but has been just as hard on the occasional critic who relies on technical jargon and a mindless appeal to "structure" as he has on the idea-mongers. In last summer's *Hudson Review,* unfortunately too late for *Music Observed,* he had an amusing exchange with a very advanced technical critic, the *Nation*'s Benjamin Boretz, who had spoken of Mozart's K. 491 as a "profound and extensive . . . exploration of the entire range of associations that can be generated from a single idea (two notes, actually, first heard as the third and fourth notes of the opening melodic line . . .)." Asked to explain this, Boretz did so in a way that led Haggin to reply: "what he calls associations are any and all instances the eye can detect of an A-flat followed by a G—or any other note followed by a note at an interval of a second—with no regard for . . . particularities of relation in time, consequent shape, or context." In musical analysis as in so many things, the new dullness turns out to be very much like the old, for there were Boretzes in the nineties too and they led Shaw to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remark that "It is perhaps natural that gentlemen who are incapable of criticism should fall back on parsing."

For Shaw and Haggin criticism, as opposed to idea-spinning and parsing, deals in "associations" which are neither strictly private nor strictly public, neither the fantasies of the system-builder nor Boretz's statistically enumerable and emotionally neutral "musical facts," but something else altogether: active responses that are highly personal yet capable of being shared, argued about, collaboratively qualified and sharpened. Criticism in this sense depends on thinking of music primarily as a medium of communication and of individual musical works as formally embodying and conveying insights which, like those of a poem or novel, can only be roughly paraphrased in the ordinary language we use to describe thoughts and emotions. Yet this sort of language is usually the only sort the critic can use in describing and evaluating what he hears and in getting his reader to hear it too. Thus Haggin finds nothing wrong with saying (for example) that what the second movement of Beethoven's Sonata Opus 111 communicates is "the sense of experience mastered, lessons learned, resignation, inner illumination achieved"—providing we realize that no such description can ever make the sonata itself superfluous and that the inadequacies of language would force us to use the same words in describing lots of other music—for example the opening of Schubert's B-flat posthumous Sonata. Of course the technical language of musical analysis can help too, but only if subordinated to the critic's central concern with description and evaluation. This concern is for Haggin embodied in the unremitting effort to apply two crucial distinctions to any given musical event: first, the distinction between "the real, active, purposeful operation of the composer's mind" and "its mechanical operation in his general formulae"; second, the parallel distinction in performance "between the playing of the instrument and the playing of the music . . . between a Hofmann who used the music to show what he could do with the piano, and a Schnabel who used the piano to illuminate the music."

This will do to suggest the central features of Haggin's work, yet it ignores much that is peripheral but extraordinary: his excellent ballet criticism, his enlightened concern with the way the concert and broadcasting industries deal with musicians and the public, his great gifts of sympathetic human observation. *Music Observed* gives a generous sampling of both central and peripheral, and its publication is therefore something to cheer about. Readers who know Haggin's other books will be interested in seeing how he handles the major performers who have emerged since *Music in the Nation;* readers who do not yet know his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other books will be led to them by *Music Observed*. There is distinguished intelligence at work on every page and the writing throughout is superb: taut but informal, unfailingly clear and straightforward, totally free of pretense and posturing. Revision and selection have also freed it of virtually every trace of what someone once perceptively called Haggin's "oral-formulaic manner," a jargonistic rigidity that sometimes mars his regular columns.

At only a very few points did I feel puzzled or dissatisfied. Haggin says he is aware of "tremendous powers" operating in Schönberg's String Trio and "impressive powers" in Stravinsky's *Agon,* yet he likes neither piece. I wish he had described those "powers" more fully, shown how their operation differs (if it does) from "the real, active, purposeful operation of the composer's mind," and explained more clearly why their operation gave him no pleasure. Also, there are two references to Mahler that bothered me, one to his "amorphously sprawling musical structures" which "[Bruno] Walter tightens and makes coherent," the other to Walter's "skillful performance" which "conceals the [Second Symphony's] discontinuities with a contrived coherence." I should like to know if the relation of performance to work here is parallel to the one Haggin finds in Szigeti's performances of Bach's Partitas, performances in which he hears "only the expressive eloquence of Szigeti's playing, implying an expressiveness in the music that is not really there." If it is not, I fail to see why Walter's performances are not just good performances that adequately convey the coherence of Mahler's music; if it is, then the implied judgment of Mahler seems inexplicably harsher than Haggin's usual view of him as a long-winded composer whose "mind always working . . . in unexpected, individual, original and fascinating ways" offsets his long-windedness. But these are small matters and there was only one piece that failed as a whole for me, a review of Samuel Antek's *This Was Toscanini* in which Haggin allows his sense of the injustices done Toscanini to divert him from describing Antek's remarkable book adequately and to lead him to use it primarily as evidence that at least Toscanini's orchestra did not betray him.

My only serious objection to Haggin's job of selection is that he didn't reprint any of the very interesting theoretical pieces he did for the *Nation* in the mid-twenties. In those days Muck and Mengelberg were the conductors who mattered, and Toscanini (along with Stokowski!) was symptomatic of a new and regrettable "emotional trend in performance": "Formerly changes in tempo and color revealed pattern and structure, now they convey emotions; and as against Mr. Mengelberg's architectonics of form we now have Mr. Toscanini's architectonics

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of emotions." And in contrast to his later, commonsense view of music as a medium of communication, Haggin believed then that music uses sounds "not to convey intellectual meanings, or emotional meanings, but to convey what must be called a purely musical significance, a significance *sui generis* . . . primarily music expresses only itself." Yet in practice this extremely austere theory seems only to have implied that in order to be fully intelligible, any "mere verbal description" of music must be supplemented by "direct, comprehending—which means educated—experience" of the music itself. I would guess that the central development in Haggin's theoretical views—which would have emerged much more clearly in *Music Observed* if the best of these early pieces had been included—was the realization that you could insist on the necessity of direct experience without committing yourself to *sui generis* musical meanings, and that structure could (and perhaps must) be articulated by direct expressive force—a realization most importantly embodied in a growing appreciation of Toscanini as the performer who above all others revealed both "structure and expressive significance," as Haggin puts it in his introduction.

And it's clear that Toscanini's conducting had personal as well as musical significance. I am not the first reviewer of this collection to point out that the principal virtue Haggin praises in Toscanini, "an economy that was a form of honesty . . . and gave the operation a moral quality," is also the principal virtue of Haggin's own thought and writing. It is this, as well as his intelligence, that makes him the only music critic since Shaw who yields as much profit and excitement as the best modern literary critics, and one of the very few men of our generation who meet the all but impossibly high standard D. H. Lawrence set when he wrote: "A critic must be emotionally alive in every fibre, intellectually capable and skilful in essential logic, and then morally very honest."

William Youngren

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rutgers UNIVERSITY PRESS

SEVEN OCCASIONS

Poems by HOLLIS SUMMERS

"Mr. Summers, a soloist like the birds he celebrates, dazzles us as he plucks the strings of his instrument. He is a very likable poet; his poems are deliberately ingratiating. . . . In one poem he provides seven different occasions in which birds show their pride in song; this is handled metaphysically, with an unerring ear and steady sparks of wit. . . . Here there is a superb fruition of poetic gifts: charm, playful wit, metaphysical cunning. . . . Mr. Summers has great resources; he has the technique to become an important poet."—JOSEPH BENNETT, *New York Times* $3.75

•

W. D. HOWELLS and ART IN HIS TIME

by CLARA MARBURG KIRK

"An exhaustive study of Howells' relation to the visual arts as expressed in his writings and acquaintance, of value to eclectic students of letters and the arts."—*Library Journal* $7.50

•

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS
New Brunswick, New Jersey

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

A NEW DIRECTIONS READER. Edited by Hayden Carruth and James Laughlin. New Directions. $1.95.
NEW DIRECTIONS IN PROSE AND POETRY, No. 18. Edited by James Laughlin. New Directions. $2.25.

The *New Directions Reader*, an anthology of passages from books published by New Directions, reminds us how extraordinary ND's publishing career has been and how much we owe to its founder and editor, James Laughlin. Heir to a steel fortune, he had the education of an American artistocrat, attending Andover, where Dudley Fitts shaped his interests, and later going on to Harvard. At 19, according to John Malcolm Brinnin, he was in Paris helping Gertrude Stein prepare her manuscripts, and in 1936, while still an undergraduate, he founded New Directions, having his first book "printed by the same printer in a Vermont country town who used to get up the *Harvard Advocate*." Because of his resources he could escape the vise of commercialism, and his own good taste in literature and literary advisors insured that his fortune was put to the best use in a country strewn with short-lived publishers who had piles of backing and good intentions, with dreadful results. By the middle of the forties, ND had become one of the most important American publishers of first-rate contemporary literature. The list of the firm's publications (an appendix to the *Reader*) not only confirms ND's reputation for the highest quality—and just compare the *Reader* to other "house" anthologies—but reaffirms ND's impact as a cultural force.

Like Alfred A. Knopf, Laughlin achieved particular distinction by importing the latest in European writing; just as Knopf had published many of the leading European writers of the period 1910 to 1930, Laughlin focused upon those who emerged in the thirties. ND became, as far as I can tell, the first American firm to release books by Boris Pasternak, Vernon Watkins, Dylan Thomas, Henri Michaux, Raymond Queneau, Paul Eluard, Elio Vittorini, and Frederico Garcia Lorca. Even as late as the sixties, it issued the first translations in America of other writers of that generation, such as Gottfried Benn, Tommaso Landolfi, and Jorge Luis Borges. In addition, between 1935 and 1945, Laughlin published the first books of a variety of American writers whose works, in those days, brought more prestige than commercial profit—John Berryman, Thomas Merton, Delmore Schwartz, Philip Rahv, Henry Miller,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Tennessee Williams. He performed another service for several older American writers: at a time when their works were either neglected or out of print, he revived Nathanael West, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Kenneth Rexroth. And Laughlin was, I think, the first publisher to do what has since become very fashionable and profitable: he issued a line of critical monographs on the major modern authors, a series, I would say, of higher intellectual intensity and critical quality than the current crop of jargonized, almost anonymous "studies." (Incidentally, the extensively detailed bibliography in the appendix is needlessly modest in not mentioning writers introduced to America in the annuals—way back in 1949, for instance, ND published extracts from Bernard Frechtman's translation of *Our Lady of the Flowers.*) In fewer than 500 books, this four-fold achievement is extraordinary, if not incomparable; and although it is impossible to measure accurately a publisher's impact, the *Reader* makes us wonder what the current literary scene would be like if ND had never existed.

But by 1965 there are numerous reasons to believe that ND has outlived its purpose. The leadership in importing what is to my taste the new European literature of the fifties was assumed by Grove Press, although by the middle of the sixties Grove has moved on to other interests. Many publishers have followed the example set by Knopf, ND, and Grove (and have, no doubt, also been influenced by the profits accruing from sales of the best modern literature to campus paperback bookshops) and many are nowadays eagerly collecting the most recent European writing, so that within the last five years the latest fashions in Paris, Moscow and Germany (though not in Rome or Madrid) have appeared in America in competent, if not definitive, translations.

And ND's efforts on behalf of American writing have been assumed by other publishers. For a variety of reasons—one of the most important a more sophisticated critical press—the past few years have shown fewer writers meriting resurrection; and ND has not been involved with any of them. Nearly all the younger American writers now on the ND list have little impact outside the ND orbit. Denise Levertov is the prime exception. Many of the others, like John Hawkes, gain more of their literary reputation, I suspect, from ND's continual backing of their work than from any intrinsic achievement. One can see a diffusion of sponsorship of the best young American writers too, for in a country that has never had a true organized literary avant-garde—our successful experimental writers tend to be individual eccentrics, working very much on their own—a single magazine or publisher is not likely to corner the market.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Instead, ND's lists these past few years suggest that the firm's most significant books have been those by older, neglected European writers: the most interesting contributions to the latest annual are the first English translations of Alfred Jarry's novella, *The Supermale* (an inspired comedy that, in many respects, seems a prelude to recent American comic novels), and a symbolic story by Gunter Eich. And I might suggest that we could certainly use good translations of Raymond Roussel, Novalis, Rafael Alberti, Sergei Essenin, Paul Celan, and many, many other continental poets.

Both the *Reader* and the latest annual were disappointing. With such a spectacular back list, the *Reader* offers less than the succession of rich desserts. The choice of material was erratic—only occasionally was a writer's best, and/or most characteristic work chosen. The annual itself, though far from being a bad collection, rivals No. 15, the "international" issue, as the worst ND has ever published. Not only is it a good deal smaller than the 600-page compendiums of the forties but it relies more upon material previously published in English, which makes up about half the book, than any other annual I have seen. And the proportion of good pieces has also strikingly decreased: "surprises" seem fewer and fainter—stories by Mark Power, a young American, and the Mexican Juan García Ponce; and the sketches of the French 'pataphysician, Raymond Roussel. The book gives the impression of editorial befuddlement, as though Laughlin did not really know what kind of writing he wanted to print and simply collected bits and pieces from his "house" regulars—Hawkes, Levertov, Gregory Corso, Elizabeth Mann Borgese, Thomas Merton, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. While a periodical may subsist on ideas or a point of view, a publisher exists primarily for his writers. Yet at the moment, the annual lacks direction and ND as a publishing house has fewer interesting active writers than ever before.

ND is actually more a part of our cultural history than a current force, and since Laughlin at just over 50 is hardly ready for retirement, this decline seems so unnecessary and sad. Indeed, his career suggests that most of our best publishers, editors and magazines, like many of our writers, did their best work when they were still quite young. The late Kurt Wolff and the Frenchman Gaston Gallimard preserved their supremely intelligent taste. No top-level American publisher seems to have.

Richard Kostelanetz

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

THE HERZOG COUNTRY

SIRS:

Richard Poirier's review-article in the Spring, 1965, PR, unpleasantly entitled "Bellows to Herzog," requires an answer. It is deliberately unjust to Saul Bellow's fiction, and it is unworthy of a critic who in the past has done work of a certain distinction. From his first clause, "*Herzog* is an insufferably smug book," to his final, fatuous comparison between Bellow and S. J. Perelman, Poirier does not criticize, as one normally understands the term; rather he sets out to destroy the public personality of Saul Bellow and to clear the air of what he seems to regard as the intellectual smog arising from the popular reception of *Herzog*.

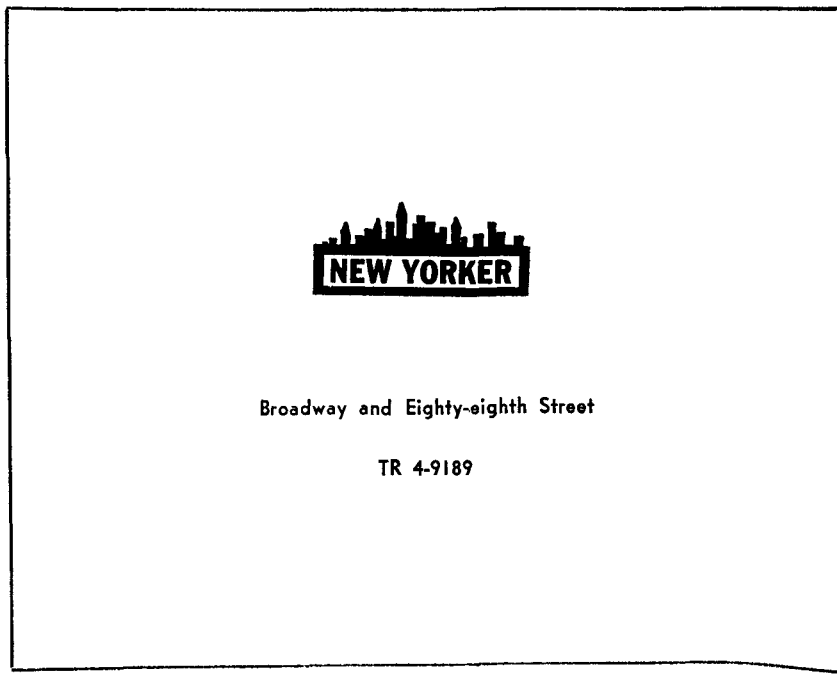
Reasons for Poirier's approach are not far to seek. From the outset, *Herzog* has been treated in a certain reach of American intellectual life as a *succès de scandale,* not as a novel; the debate over *Herzog* has been conducted in terms of the author's private life rather than in terms we used to call literary. Having decided that the New Criticism with its emphasis upon the text was simpleminded, a large number nibbling at the fringes of the literary life, plus university instructors and their students, have joyously set about regarding every contemporary *roman* as necessarily *à clef*. It is hard to uncover a literary undergraduate or a Greenwich Village non-writer who does not refer to Bellow as "Saul," who cannot tell you more about "Saul's" private life than Boswell knew of Johnson's, and who cannot give you a detailed map of the Herzog country. Bellow is of course only the most recent victim of such impertinence. Doubtless there are times when one must talk of a writer's personality and of the relationships between biography and imaginative projection; the psychological puzzle of a Stendhal is an example. Equally there are times when biographical prying creates distortion and intrusion, when the writer's life is merely a parallel, not a key. It is a matter of context, perspective, and emphasis. When perspective and emphasis are ignored, we get confusion and intrusion. Whether *Herzog* is or is not the product of the writer's personal troubles is no one's business but Saul Bellow's.

Confusion and intrusion account for inaccuracies, I think, in Poirier's basic approach to *Herzog*. I find an insufferable smugness in his considering Bellow as a "Jewish" novelist who, not content to " 'do' Jewish urban life brilliantly," tries to transcend his Jewishness by making Herzog into a "Modern American Everyman." This is like referring to Ralph Ellison as a "Negro" novelist (as other critics have done), and to relegate both to the regionalists, the local colorists, the provincial: to treat them as latter-day Sarah Orne Jewetts. If we knew nothing of Bellow, it might be possible to believe that *Herzog* had been written not by a Jew, but by a talented Zen Buddhist, a Christian Scientist, or a Roman Catholic. Bellow's achievement, both in *Herzog* and in the body of his previous work, lies in his ability to use the Jew imaginatively without writing a "Jewish" novel, without getting stuck in that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

particular genre of which Poirier, with justification, disapproves. The difficulty with that genre, as the work of Malamud, Roth, and others testifies, is that a cluster of customs, language, shared assumptions and views no longer exists in this country, if it ever did; therefore the "Jewish" novelist must be busy about re-creating, and often making sentimental, a segment of experience which has then to be trampled upon and denied. Bellow does not do this. Rather, his novels have a dimension that is social in the broadest sense, comprising politics, manners, morals and mores, together with a language all his own. One may not care for that language, but it is his alone, as the many attempts to imitate it so painfully prove.

At its best, Bellow's language is the source of his strength, and the point of his vulnerability on the few occasions when it fails him. It is worth remembering that when he began to write, there was Hemingway, there was a tired and sterile Naturalism, or there was an equally sterile kind of Europeanized experimentation in the manner of Dos Passos, Thomas and Virginia Wolfe-Woolf. Bellow reached for and found a language that was neither excessively literary nor one more variety of Naturalism. He was able to combine the intellectual with the colloquial, not always with success, to be sure, as no one had done before him. This is a literary accomplishment, one which is abundantly present in *Herzog,* with variations and refinements upon the earlier work. In my view (and in the view of many readers who liked



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the novel until it became a best-seller) Bellow in *Herzog* performed a delightful variation upon that oldest of devices, the epistolary novel. Herzog's epistles are not for publication, however; they are, let it be emphasized, the workings of a fevered brain, sparks shooting off the emery-wheel of personal crisis, by turns amusing, silly, and occasionally profound. This is how Bellow wanted it. Herzog is an imagined character, in spite of anyone's insistence that he is a tape-recording from Bellow's own life, and in spite of Poirier's judgment that the letters are "uninventive and tiresome."

Poirier feels that Bellow is too insufferably ambitious, wanting to "possess our minds" with a "portraiture alternative to [sic] the alienated Waste Land figures of earlier twentieth-century literature." And not only is Bellow's idea of debauchery inadequate, but the entire literary method in *Herzog* is "disastrously claustrophobic," and the narrative form "protective." Bellow's preoccupation with "ideas" is glib, naive, irrelevant, sophomoric, shabby, and dressed in "unconvincing rhetoric," while those wretched ideas are inferior to S. J. Perelman's comedy. Accompanying these assertions, now apparent and now hidden, like a dolphin playing about a ship, is the criticism that the imaginative construction and the rhetorical burden are out of balance.

The form of *Herzog* is of course "enclosed"; that enclosure again is carefully worked out, and why not? Most novels tend to be, unless, like *The Adventures of Augie March,* they are deliberately open. The narrative form is of course "protective." Every novelist is concerned to "protect" his material in one manner or another. That is form; that is the art of the novel. Herzog and the other characters, the letters, the changes in point of view, the formal structure, the "ideas" evoked throughout the narrative—all constitute what in old-fashioned criticism was called, in Trilling's words, a literary idea. Poirier confuses idea-ideas with Bellow's always controlled, always projected literary idea. And that literary idea might be defined as the depiction of crisis in the life of an interesting, middle-aged man (*not* Jew) who is impatient with the easy answers provided by contemporary American pseudo-intellectual life. Bellow is not giving us an alternative to the "alienated Waste Land figures" of the recent past; to say so is to inflate the novel intolerably and to misread what is in fact there. Rather, the imbalance or "gap" that Poirier refers to between form and content is a calculated and successful portrayal of the distance we all see between the social or political or philosophical, and the merely personal. Herzog's whizzing confusion between politics, God, Eisenhower, and Madeline is a marvelous rendering of a basic, modern disparity between the self and the world, one for which I remain grateful.

There is of course a further disparity between Bellow's ambition and his achievement in *Herzog,* a disparity which he happens to share with Choderlos de Laclos, Jane Austen, Proust, Mann, Baroja, Broch, and various other novelists. No question that Ramona and her shrimp Arnaud are bores, although it should not be necessary to say that like the shrimp, Ramona is intended as a joke, one of the handful of jokes scattered through

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new america

is needed for its democratic perspective on struggles for social change. Its radicalism is in the best tradition of going to the root of problems, of favoring concrete analysis over sloganeering."

—Bayard Rustin

new america

can open your eyes to challenging ideas and surprising possibilities in social and political arenas often neglected by the mass media. For example:

Back when "affluence" was the national catch-phrase, Michael Harrington was exploring the roots of American poverty and describing the world of the poor in New America.

When the pundits were saying that Khrushchev had the reins of Soviet power firmly in his hands, New America was arguing a different view: "he was pounding his shoe to save his neck."

During the Berkeley student uprising last fall, New America was the first publication to carry reports vividly portraying the genuine mass nature of the protests by students who participated.

new america

published twice a month by the Socialist Party, U.S.A., is the only democratic socialist newspaper in the United States. Many of its contributors—such as **Norman Thomas, Michael Harrington, Bayard Rustin, Tom Kahn, Thomas R. Brooks, Robert Alexander,** Harry Golden, Erich Fromm, Paul Jacobs, Herman Benson, Norman Hill, **Robert Tucker**—are involved in the very programs and events about which they write. They can keep you in close touch with the movements that are shaping the new America. . . .

Subscribe now: only $4 for one year, $7 for two; $3 for ten months (student rate).

New America
1182 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10001
Please enter my subscription to New America.
I enclose ☐ $4/1 yr. ☐ $7/2 yrs. ☐ $3/10 mos.
Name .....
Address .....
City .....
State ..... Zip .....

the novel that fails. Why do solemn people distrust unsolemn, or intermittently serious, novels anyway? There is an attack to be written on *Herzog,* for occasional failures of taste and language, but Richard Poirier's condescending, world-weary tone, together with his confusion between the personal and the literary, have not done the job. In "Bellows to Herzog" Poirier is in the situation of an anti-submarine ship commander I knew early in World War II who, having made a perfect slow run on a submarine and released his depth-charges, was so bemused by his technique that he forgot to increase speed in order to get away from the destructive pattern, thus opening seams and gently sinking his own ship.

JOHN MCCORMICK

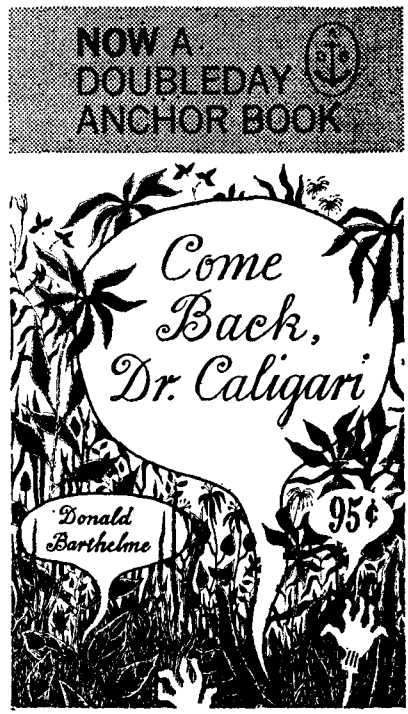
MR. POIRIER REPLIES:

The only obvious reason why Mr. McCormick sees things in my review that aren't there and can't make out the things that are is that he had to read it under water. Maybe that's also where he discovered a "debate over *Herzog* conducted in terms of the author's private life." No such debate has occured in anything I've read, and I've probably read everything in print about this novel. I've also read my own review and there's nothing of the sort there either, no mention of Bellow's private life or of his "public personality," no hint, even, that the novel might be a *roman à clef.* Mr. McCormick isn't simply inaccurate; for someone who picked this argument, he's extraordinarily uninformed and imprecise. It's almost as if he *wants* to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ignore evidence, remarking wistfully that "If we knew nothing of Bellow, it might be possible to believe that *Herzog* had been written not by a Jew," implying that it might have been written by Mr. McCormick's "talented Zen Buddhist." And when he says that to bring up the concept of the Waste Land with respect to *Herzog* "is to inflate the novel intolerably," I can only agree, since that's just what I said, but I'd point out that the inflation occurs not in my review but throughout the book and specifically on p. 75. Still, how could the relevance of the Waste Land outlook to *Herzog* be understood by anyone who thinks that the literary context in which Bellow located himself when he began to write included "Thomas and Virginia Wolfe-Woolf"! Mr. McCormick's critical theorizing is no less out of touch with the issues than are his citations. Yes, the form of a novel *is* "protective," but what I criticized was Bellow's relationship to Herzog and the degree to which it prevents him from making more than a superficial penetration of that character or of the way he sounds and thinks. That the protectiveness is ultimately self-defeating, I demonstrate at some length and without using that platitudinous pairing of Mr. McCormick's "form and content," the flotsam and jetsam of literary criticism.

Any effort to reach the sources of life in a work by a major writer means, if one is at all successful, discovering where he is alive in a book and where he is only deceptively so. Serious criticism is necessarily headed in the direction of the author's personality not as it exists in rumor or gossip or details of his private life but as it exists in the way he writes. This is true of *Herzog*—it is also true of *An American Dream,* to cite an example, since Mr. McCormick needs one, of a book that really has been treated wretchedly by reviewers who failed to grasp the distinction, made by the book itself, between the conduct of the writer in its pages and his conduct outside of them. Of course the comfortable way out is to write the kind of review proposed by Mr. McCormick when he offers a possible line of attack on *Herzog* "for occasional failures of taste and language." But that isn't criticism at all. It's rather a kind of hedge-clipping that doesn't begin to do credit to Bellow, to any writer worth the attention of criticism, or to Mr. McCormick.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INS AND OUTS

SIRS:

I trust that I may be forgiven a bit of irritability on the score of Frank Kermode's review of my book, *The Anxious Object* (PR, Spring 1965). What is annoying about it is that it is typical. The subject of *The Anxious Object* is, as stated by its subtitle, art today and its audience. "I am remote," confesses Professor Kermode, "from the paintings discussed." He is even more remote, though he doesn't seem aware of it, from the intellectual, social, historical and psychological situation in which these paintings (and sculptures, assemblages, animations, etc.) are being produced and appreciated. This handicap he promptly blames on the book: "I am remote from the paintings discussed and the photographs in the book give a poor idea of them." Do I need to advise Professor Kermode that all photographs give a poor idea of paintings? The reproductions in my book are excellent black and whites, but they cannot supply the basic data that Professor Kermode lacks. They were intended only for the one purpose that photographs can fulfill, that is, as reminders of the paintings for persons who had seen them or paintings by the same artist or of the same order. But Kermode wanted the discussion in my book to relate to photographs so he goes on to complain about where these were placed and how much of the text has been devoted to them.

How straighten things out when they are that far off the line to begin with? Since Professor Kermode does not know the paintings or the conditions of their creation, he decided to discuss "the theoretical aspect of the essays." He took up my "theories" apart from the data to which they apply and he did so, naturally, in terms of *his* theories and his terminology (e.g., the term "tragic generation" in his closing sentence is his term not mine). Also naturally, he then finds my theories confused, mythical, disorderly, what not? How does one know that a theory is confused and mythical if one is ignorant of the matter which that theory encompasses? Is Professor Kermode also prepared to criticize a report on the flora of the moon? He reminds me of Dostoevsky's typical Russian schoolboy—given a map of the stars he hands it back with corrections. The problem is that people think they can talk about art without getting close to it. Let him read David Jones on the need for front-line experience. Professor Kermode started his review by saying, "Mr. Rosenberg's views on the art of his time are widely quoted and apparently well understood by friend and enemy alike." Why did it not occur to him that people understood what I said because they had witnessed what was going on and wanted to understand it, and that the confusion which he managed to find "the more I reflect on this new book" might have been his own contribution?

HAROLD ROSENBERG

MR. KERMODE REPLIES:

I am genuinely sorry to have irritated Mr. Rosenberg. But is he saying that his books have no general validity outside the galleries in which the pictures can be examined? His books are widely circulated to people who are remote from New York, and seem to develop theories of a high degree of generality; if they are meaningless outside that city it might be fair to say so on the first page.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

SIRS:

Mr. Fraser finds so many of Diana Trilling's judgments "shocking" in his review of her *Claremont Essays* (PR, Winter 1965), judgments which left me unshocked even when I did not altogether share them, that I began to wonder about the decline of my moral sensibility. But then he himself goes on to say such extraordinary things that they left me wondering about his.

In referring to Diana Trilling's essay on the Hiss Case, whose point he misses (it does *not* re-try the issues but evaluates the reaction of ritualistic liberals to them), Mr. Fraser writes that he was struck by the fact:

> that she did not consider what seems to me the most interesting possibility, that Hiss really was a fellow-traveler, and that Chambers knew it and (a new fanaticism being just as unscrupulous as an old one) had no hesitation in framing him.

Now this possibility is so far from being interesting that it is positively banal. Far more interesting possibilities were bruited about before the trials, for example, that Chambers was still secretly a member of the Communist Party under orders to denounce Hiss in order to discredit the New Deal, that his accusations were the revenge of a cast-off homosexual (he had taken up wrestling as a Columbia student!), etc.

Now the striking thing about the sentence I quoted from Mr. Fraser

SCRIBNER FIRST EDITIONS

New distinguished titles in
SCRIBNER FIRST EDITIONS

HUGH NISSENSON

A PILE OF STONES

Taut, dramatic short stories about the condition of the twentieth-century Jew and modern man's relationship to God, by a young writer whose work has appeared in *Harper's, Commentary, Esquire* and other national magazines. $3.95; paperbound, $1.65

HOWARD MOSS

FINDING THEM LOST AND OTHER POEMS

The new and finest work of a writer who holds a select position in contemporary poetry. The volume includes a magnificent translation of Paul Valery's "The Cemetery by the Sea." $3.50; paperbound, $1.65

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is that he speaks of the most "interesting" possibility. But when we are concerned about the truth, it is not the most interesting possibility which is relevant but the most probable or credible. After all we are not concerned with fantasy or a dramatic construction but with human lives and problems of justice. The most probable or credible possibility can only be evaluated in relation to *evidence*. Mrs. Trilling knows this evidence inside out; Mr. Fraser gives no indication of any familiarity with it. His judgment therefore seems irresponsible and his speculations about Hiss's guilt or innocence unfounded.

As bad as this is, what follows is even worse. Mr. Fraser writes:

> The Soviet system has had virtue enough to stay alive in the world for forty-seven years, and I wondered whether, in her rigorous need to judge, Mrs. Trilling had made allowance enough for the basic virtue—a certain coherence or toughness—that must be allowed to all systems and attitudes that have the mere power of persisting.

This judgment disqualifies Mr. Fraser from passing *moral* judgment on anybody or anything. It implies that the longer Hitler's system endured, the more basic virtue it would have, that the greater the might and staying power of any tyranny the greater its virtue, that there was more to be said morally for the system of American slavery in 1863 than 250 years earlier when it was imposed. As the last illustration indicates, precisely the opposite is often true. The longer a system based on injustice continues, the more it reveals its true nature, the greater the number of its victims and the amount of their suffering, the more of a moral abomination it is.

In my eyes Mrs. Trilling's moral stature is enhanced when she is criticized by anyone holding Mr. Fraser's views about the nature of basic virtue. There is the interesting possibility, of course, that Mr. Fraser does not understand the meaning of his words but it does not seem probable.

SIDNEY HOOK

MR. FRASER REPLIES:

I want to take up one point only in Professor Hook's letter, that in his penultimate paragraph. Let me start with a little analogy. Everybody would agree that heavy drinking is an evil, that it ruins annually many brilliant minds and destroys what had once been happy marriages. "Drink is intolerable" is as plausible a proposition as Mrs. Trilling's or Professor Hook's, "Communism is intolerable." Yet in the United States the direct attempt to abolish the intolerable, through Prohibition, not only didn't abolish it but brought about all sorts of new intolerabilities, organized crime and the growth of contempt for law in ordinary decent citizens, in its wake. It also destroyed the possibility of the civilized social pleasure that comes from moderate drinking; and it affronted man's right to the pursuit of unhappiness, his right to make tragic choices. Tolerance is a *very* moral attitude. When we say that something must be tolerated, we are in fact making a complex moral judgment: it is evil, but the results of trying to eradicate it violently, root and branch, would be worse.

I do not know of *any* human system of government that is not based, in some degree, on injustice. All states, after all, have their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

origin in the conquest and dispossession of early inhabitants (such as the American Indian). In all societies, a comparative minority enjoy some fullness of life at the expense of some meagerness and restriction of life for a comparative majority. The evil that comes in a plural world, from different states tolerating each others' different kinds and degrees of injustice seems to me less than the evil that comes from states assuming a right to make war, at any moment, on each other for the sake of making each other over in the aggressive state's image. I do think, in fact, that it would have been morally wrong for Lincoln to declare war on the Confederacy for the express and sole purpose of abolishing slavery; he was forced into war by the Confederacy, to defend the Union. The war was *about* slavery, Lincoln detested slavery, but its recognition as a just war paradoxically depended on the legal pretext which the Confederacy had offered him on a plate.

Carlyle's use of the word "virtue" and mine were paradoxical and ironic (I do not suppose a delicate sense of literary nuance can quite consist with Professor Hook's role as the professionally highly moral Cold Warrior). But there *is* a sense in which strength and staying power are the roots of moral virtue; and a bad man or a bad system does persist, not through vices, which are always weakening, but through remaining virtues. The Confederates held on so long in the Civil War not because they were lazy and cruel but because they were loyal and courageous. These are sad, familiar facts about human nature and human history; being sadly aware of them does not make one an immoralist.

THE IOWA CENTER FOR MODERN LETTERS

presents

the first in a series of yearly conferences

Iowa Memorial Union, University of Iowa
Oct. 28-30, 1965

on the subject

"The Poet as Critic"

Speakers include Richard Ellmann, René Wellek, Elizabeth Sewell, Murray Krieger, Ralph Freedman and Donald Hall

For information write to

William D. Coder,
Director of Conferences
The University of Iowa,
Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

SUBSCRIBE TO

The Southern Review

After an absence of 20 years, Louisiana State University is again publishing *The Southern Review*—a quarterly of fiction, poetry, essays, reviews and articles with emphasis on contemporary literature in the U.S. and abroad and special interest in Southern culture and history.
Vol. I, No. 3 celebrates the 30th year of our founding . . . with an impressive list of contributors including Katherine Anne Porter, Robert Penn Warren, Randall Jarrell and others.
U.S., Mexico, Canada—
1 year $4; 2 years $7; 3 years $10
Overseas—
1 year $5; 2 years $9; 3 years $13
Copies of Vol. I, Nos. 1 & 2 available. State issue to start your subscription.

The Southern Review
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803
Drawer D-5
University Station

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOCIOLOGY ITALIAN STYLE

SIRS:

I would like to comment on George Lichtheim's article "The Triumph of the Fact" (PR, Fall 1964). I found it very intelligent, very witty and at the same time very dangerous.

It has become the great fashion to look down on "facts," since a generally accepted method has been developed by the social sciences to come to know them. This is of course in those parts of the world where the method of analyzing social reality with the purpose of improving the human lot has been brilliantly mastered. . . .

On the other hand, if Mr. Lichtheim were living and working, as I do, in a culture where (far from planting their feet "on the grave of metaphysics") the few social scientists in existence are trying desperately to help guide social policy on the basis of knowledge and rational planning and not by the still prevailing folkways and myths, the latter sometimes "planted" and other times the result of unbroken prescientific attitudes, he might be infinitely more tolerant of the "fact." Agreed that the concern with questionnaire construction is lowly in the intellectual pecking order but then so is the concern with the common cold. . . .

The developing countries, if they do develop, will owe a debt of gratitude to those social scientists who were interested in the facts rather than absorbed in theoretical systems, among them to David Riesman who, starting from the law, possibly turned social scientist because he saw the *need* for fact gathering.

ELLEN B. HILL

MR. LICHTHEIM REPLIES:

I was only concerned with the situation in American sociology, so far as I am able, as an outsider, to understand it. Doubtless there are some backward countries not yet equipped with the latest empirical and statistical tools. I take it that the Italian situation, with which Mrs. Hill is professionally concerned, displays some special features. Even so I do not quite see how the factual approach by itself can be of much use in dealing with social problems in a Catholic milieu. I should have thought it was a question of values. What does one do when people tell one that family planning is immoral? Recite statistics, or try to change their attitudes?

In any case I do not see why my harmless little squib about Professor Riesman's researches should be thought "very dangerous." There is surely not much danger of American sociology moving away from its present approach. Such a move would call empiricism into question and raise all sorts of troublesome possibilities, such as the fusion of historical and sociological concepts, or even an attempt to get beyond the disjunction of "facts" and "values." I see no evidence of a move in this direction and must decline to be held responsible for whatever residual indifference to "the facts" may still lurk in some dark corners. Most sociologists of my acquaintance are quite happy with their approach, and wholly disinclined to ask awkward questions about their own assumptions. If they ever do, it will be for sound professional reasons. For my part, I am content to wait.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN REPRINT

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edited by
JAMES A. HARRISON

"The Virginia Edition"
IN SEVENTEEN VOLUMES
New York 1902
THE STANDARD EDITION
Reprint Limited to 300 Sets
Available September, 1965

•

Pre-Publication Offer
(Effective only until the end of August, 1965)*
17 Volume Set, (Cloth) $170.00
*(Thereafter $200.00)

•

AMS PRESS, INC.
56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE VOLUME:

The essence of Sartre's thought—

selected from the entire range of his novels, plays and theoretical writings

THIS monumental book brings together all the major philosophical passages from the previously untranslated *Critique de la raison dialectique*, as well as from: BEING AND NOTHINGNESS • SAINT GENET • WHAT IS LITERATURE? • NAUSEA • THE FLIES • NO EXIT • SEARCH FOR A METHOD • THEORY OF THE EMOTIONS • THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE IMAGINATION • THE CONDEMNED OF ALTONA • SITUATIONS

In many cases, the translations used have been thoroughly revised. This encyclopedic view of Sartre's thought will become indispensable to everyone who wishes to understand the existentialist viewpoint, as developed by one of the most stimulating European thinkers of the twentieth century.

The Philosophy of JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Edited and Introduced by **ROBERT DENOON CUMMING**

500 pages • $7.95, now at your bookstore

RANDOM HOUSE
457 Madison Avenue, New York 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW BOOKS from NEW DIRECTIONS

EBERHART

SELECTED POEMS 1930-1965 by Richard Eberhart. This paperbound volume represents work chosen from all of Richard Eberhart's earlier volumes, from *A Bravery of Earth* (1930) to *The Quarry* (1964), together with some previously unpublished poems. Man and nature, never divisible, are his chief themes, to which he brings a metric subtlety and a power of phrase and image uniquely his own. ND Paperbook 198, $1.75

KAUFMAN

SOLITUDES CROWDED WITH LONELINESS by Bob Kaufman. There is deep excitement in the originality and power of Bob Kaufman's poems. The world of jazz, social protest, and the plight of the lonely one fighting the crowd are among the subjects of this young American Negro—but *anything* he chooses to write about comes vividly, almost violently alive in the highly-charged language of this remarkable poet.
ND Paperbook 199, $1.50

MERTON

GANDHI ON NON-VIOLENCE edited, with an introduction, by Thomas Merton. For this original paperbook, Thomas Merton has selected the basic statements of principle and interpretation which made up Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence. In his long introduction, Father Merton shows how Gandhi linked the thought of East and West in his search for universal truth, relating Gandhi's *Ahimsa* to traditional Hindu *Dharma*, to the Greek and our own concepts of personal freedom, and to the thinking of Thomas Aquinas and later theologians on conscience, good-and-evil, and peace. ND Paperbook 197, $1.50

MONTALE

SELECTED POEMS of Eugenio Montale. A bilingual edition edited, with an introduction, by Glauco Cambon; various translators. Although Eugenio Montale has published in his lifetime but three slender volumes of poetry, their quality has been such as to win him acknowledged preeminence in Italy today and a world-wide reputation among his peers, the poets of other countries. This first American edition of his work presents selections from each of the three published books, with the original Italian and English translation *en face*. Clothbound, $5.00
ND Paperbook 193, $1.75

POUND

A LUME SPENTO and Other Early Poems by Ezra Pound. *A Lume Spento* was Pound's first book of poems, published in a limited edition of 100 copies in 1908, and long a rare collector's item. His second book, *A Quinzaine for This Yule*, was brought out for Christmas, 1908, and is perhaps even more rare. Both are reprinted here for the first time, along with ten previously unpublished poems also dating from his "Venetian period," and recently re-discovered. *A Lume Spento* includes facsimile pages from the original books and a little-known photograph of Pound taken about 1908. Clothbound, $5.00

REICHEK

ETCETERA: A Book of Drawings by Jesse Reichek. In this book, which has no words, only pictures, the San Francisco artist Jesse Reichek achieves a kind of "narrative experience" in purely visual terms, through a sequence of abstract drawings whose forms modulate from one to the next. Saul Bellow has said of Reichek, "He shows us the bonds of matter, tangle and clarity, form on the border of chaos, equilibrium which only just succeeds in maintaining itself." ND Paperbook 196, $1.60

NEW DIRECTIONS 333 Sixth Ave., New York 10014

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

O CANADA:
An American's Notes on Canadian Culture
By Edmund Wilson. $4.95

THE FAMILY MOSKAT
By Isaac Bashevis Singer. Cloth $5.95;
Noonday paperback $2.25

THE ESCAPE ARTIST
By David Wagoner. $4.95

LADIES OF THE RACHMANINOFF EYES
By Henry Van Dyke. $4.95

THE FETISH and Other Stories
By Alberto Moravia. $4.95

EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE
By Flannery O'Connor. Introduction by Robert Fitzgerald. $4.95

THE KING OF THE CATS
By F. W. Dupee. $4.95

THE KANDY-KOLORED TANGERINE-FLAKE STREAMLINE BABY
By Tom Wolfe. $5.50

SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION
By Thomas Merton. $4.95

FOR THE UNION DEAD
By Robert Lowell $3.95

77 DREAM SONGS
By John Berryman. $3.95

BAD CHARACTERS
By Jean Stafford. $4.95

CABOT WRIGHT BEGINS
By James Purdy. $4.95

Now at your bookstore

FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX
19 Union Square W., New York 10003

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED